

# *Ghostland*

*by*

*Elliot O'Donnell*



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# GHOSTLAND



# GHOSTLAND

BY

ELLIOT O'DONNELL

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"Twenty Years' Experiences as a Ghost Hunter,"

"The Banshee," "The Haunted Man,"

"Haunted Houses of London,"

&c. &c.

*Folk-lore*



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# GHOSTLAND

## CHAPTER I

### MY EARLIEST EXPERIENCES OF GHOSTLAND

IF, as some presumably sane people think, there is such a thing as a psychic faculty, and if faculties, like diseases and mental and physical idiosyncrasies, are hereditary, then, assuredly, I should be very psychic, for my forbears, both paternal and maternal, were certainly in touch with the Unknown. Taking the paternal side first, there is Niall Niallach, or Niall of the Nine Hostages, from whom I can claim direct descent.

Niall reigned from A.D. 375 to about 398, and, with the exception, perhaps, of his son, Conaill Gulban, sometimes styled the first O'Donnell, he seems to have figured in more ghostly happenings than any other Irishman, either before or since. Hence, constant reference<sup>1</sup> is made to him in works on ancient Irish ghosts and folk-lore, and his spirit, it was said, haunted his old home in the North of Ireland for many generations.

Indeed, many of the ghosts and other supernatural phenomena, as well as one Banshee in particular, associated with our branch of the clan, are believed by us to be traceable either to him or to Conaill

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *Bardic Stories*, by Pat Kennedy, published 1871.

Gulban. Leaving the subject of ghosts for a time, let me now explain (I have often been asked to do so) my relationship with "Red Hugh," the famous Irish chieftain, who fought so gallantly for his country's independence and was eventually poisoned by one of Queen Elizabeth's emissaries in Spain.

About the middle of the fifteenth century my ancestor, Foirdealbheach An Fhiona, Prince of Ulster, died, leaving two sons, Shane Luirg and Niall Garbh, and Niall, being the more warlike and masterful of the two, was elected "The O'Donnell," instead of Shane, though Shane was by several years the elder. Not unnaturally this led to a split between the brothers, Shane Luirg moving south to County Limerick, where his descendants have remained up to the present generation, and Niall Garbh staying on in Tirconnell, their ancient Northern home.

Well, "Red Hugh" was a direct descendant of Niall Garbh (Niall Garbh was his great-great-great-grandfather), whilst my family traces a direct descent from Shane Luirg. It will, therefore, be seen that "Red Hugh's" descendants (there are still a few of them) and I have an ancestor in common, that ancestor being, as I have already stated, fifteenth-century Foirdealbheach An Fhiona,<sup>1</sup> father of Shane Luirg and Niall Garbh.

Coming to a much later date, one of my forbears, another Hugh O'Donnell, who died in Limerick in 1610, married Mary O'Brien of the House of Thomond.

Now the O'Briens of Thomond possess a Banshee

<sup>1</sup> See genealogy of the O'Donnells in Record Office, Ulster King-of-Arms, Dublin Castle.

(it is for this reason that I have alluded to them), and ever since our intermarriage with them their Banshee has periodically haunted us, too. Lady Fanshawe in her memoirs, compiled in the seventeenth century and published about twenty years ago, gives a very interesting account of it.

It appeared to her, when she was on a visit to Lady Honora O'Brien, daughter of Henry, fifth Earl of Thomond, at the castle of Lemaneagh, near Lake Inchiquin, and she describes it as being, in appearance, like a woman of ghastly pallor, with very red hair. The description tallies exactly with that of the apparition seen by various past members of my family, prior to a death. I have been told it still haunts the O'Briens, as it still haunts us.

Yet another ghostly legacy may be traced to this same Mary O'Brien, wife of my ancestor, Hugh O'Donnell. Hugh and Mary had a son, Edmund, who married Bridget O'Rourk of the House of Brefni, and the House of Brefni, of whom I believe, by the way, there no longer exists any direct descendants on the male side, not only possesses a Banshee in the shape of a very beautiful woman, but is, in addition, associated with a remarkable haunting.<sup>1</sup> In brief it is as follows: About the beginning of the fourteenth century there lived at Mitchelstown Castle, in the South of Ireland, a wealthy and powerful landowner named Maurice Fitzgerald, popularly known as "The White Knight." He was of a very despotic, tyrannical disposition, and being, also, a

<sup>1</sup> See *The Romance of the Aristocracy*, by the late Sir Bernard Burke, Ulster King-of-Arms, published 1855.

born fighter he had subdued all those who were in any way opposed to him, with the exception of the O'Rourks of Brefni, with whom he continued to be on terms of the most bitter hostility.

Well, on a certain day, one of his hirelings, anxious to curry favour with him, informed him that an O'Rourk, one of the very family he detested so much, was staying in the adjacent Abbey of Kilmallock. Pale with fury and hardly able to credit such news, the White Knight, with a troop of his retainers, all armed to the teeth, set out for the Abbey, and, on arriving there, demanded of the Abbess that she should immediately give up to him any O'Rourk whom she might have on the premises. Not daring to disobey a man with such an evil reputation, and so absolutely reckless, the Abbess did as she was told, and, without delay, delivered into his hands Elgiva O'Rourk, daughter of the chief of the clan, who, on account of her extraordinary beauty, was known as "The Flower of Brefni."

"Thou wilt come with me," he said to her angrily, "and remain at Mitchelstown for just as long as I choose to keep you there."

"And after that, tyrant?" Elgiva responded, trying to retain her self-composure in the face of the savage soldiers.

"We will see," the White Knight snapped. Then, bidding her mount a spare horse held by two of his retainers, he rode away with her to his castle, little dreaming of the folly of such a move, since living with him at the castle was his son, Edmund, a very impressionable youth of about twenty years of age.

It was, of course, the same old story. The youth chanced one day to see the fair prisoner looking out of one of the windows of the grim old building, and promptly fell in love with her.

After that he continually visited her, when his father was out of the way, and, in the end, he helped her to escape, and they fled together to the convent at Kilmallock. Unfortunately, however, they had been seen, and it was not long before the White Knight and his followers were in hot pursuit. They arrived at the convent just when Elgiva was about to be married to Edmund. The end was tragedy. In a frightful passion the White Knight entered the chapel, rushed at Elgiva, and, in spite of Edmund's endeavours to prevent him, stabbed the Flower of Brefni repeatedly with his sword. She fell on the floor of the aisle, mortally wounded, but, before expiring, uttered words to this effect:

“For this cruel deed of thine, foul knight, thou shalt do penance in the Hereafter for all eternity.”

The White Knight, who died some years later, was buried in the Abbey of Kilmallock, and it is a recorded fact that every day, for centuries after, no matter how warm and dry the weather, spots of moisture were always found on the surface of his tombstone. Sceptics, of course, smiled when believers in the curse attributed the phenomenon to it, declaring that the moisture was nothing but the tear-drops the White Knight had been doomed to shed in the Hereafter; but, although many of them tried hard, they could never find any explanation to the mystery, saving on the basis of the

Supernatural. The phenomenon continued right up to the demolition of the tomb, which took place less than a century ago, when the property was in the possession of the Cootes of Mount Coote. In addition to the hauntings in our family, due, undoubtedly, to our O'Brien and O'Rourke ancestry, a death warning, in the shape of a haunting by a coach drawn by headless horses and driven by a headless coachman, has been handed down to us by the Vizes. My grandmother, whose maiden name was Vize (spelt sometimes Vyse), was one of the Vizes, originally of Norman extraction, who came over to County Cork from Devon, where they were fairly large landowners in the seventeenth century, bringing with them, of course, the haunting in question; and my grandmother, when a girl, actually saw the phantom coach drive up to the door of her home shortly before the death of one of her relatives.

According to her own account of the incident, she was seated in one of the sitting-rooms of the house on Christmas Eve, with the rest of her family, waiting for some guests to arrive, when the sound of horses' hoofs and wheels coming along the gravel drive at a tremendous rate made her run to the window, to see who it could be that was driving so furiously. What she saw was so horrible that she fainted.

These are some of the ghostly happenings connected with the paternal side of my family, and I might, perhaps, claim yet another link with the occult through my connection with Edgar Allan Poe.

My great-grandmother, who was one of the Elliots of Baltimore, was closely related to him, and, needless

to say, he was a keen student of the occult, and, I have reason to believe, himself a psychic.

Though my mother was not Irish, she was deeply interested in the Supernatural, and had had many ghostly experiences, especially in her girlhood, when she lived with her parents in their country home, an old house full of queer nooks and corners, and long, gloomy corridors.

One night, she told me, she awoke out of a deep sleep, to see, to her surprise, a man in eighteenth-century costume, blue tail-coat, peruke and knee-breeches, seated in front of the fire, with his back towards her. As she stared at him in amazement he began slowly to turn round, and she became so alarmed that she shrieked; whereupon he at once vanished. A few seconds later her relatives came running into the room and found her in a dead faint.

On another occasion, she was awakened in the middle of the night by feeling a heavy weight on the bed, and, on looking to see what it was, she perceived in the moonlight an enormous black cat sitting on the counterpane. Very much frightened, she screamed loudly, whilst the cat jumped off the bed and disappeared in a cupboard. As before, her relatives then came running into the room, and, on hearing what had happened, made a thorough search.

However, no cat was to be found either in the cupboard or elsewhere. It then dawned on my mother and those who had taken part in the search that what she had seen must have been supernatural. Subsequently, this same phantasm frequently appeared to various members of the household, always in the dead

of night, and always, as on the first occasion, it vanished in a cupboard.

A rather curious corroboration of this haunting occurred some time after my mother's family had left the house, which, by the way, is still in existence. The son of a local parson, named Jones, was walking with a stranger, one day, past the house, when the stranger's dog suddenly crouched on the ground and began to whine and shiver, showing every indication of intense terror.

"Why, what in the world's the matter with the animal?" Jones said.

The stranger pointed to the house. "That place is haunted," he replied. "There's a figure clad in a blue tail-coat and knee-breeches standing in the porch looking at us, and by his side is a huge black cat. They don't belong to this world. They are supernatural. That is why my dog is behaving in such a strange manner. Like me, he comes from the Hebrides, where second sight is not solely confined to human beings."

Jones, who used to tell the story, always declared that he was positive his Scottish companion had never heard the house was reputed to be haunted, and that, in fact, he could not possibly have done so, as he had never been in the locality before.

Although, oddly enough, Jones himself did not see the ghosts on this occasion, he often had experiences with the Unknown, and sometimes in connection with this very house. For instance, one morning, when he was driving in a pony-trap with a relative of mine along the road that leads past the house,

just as they came within sight of the entrance, he suddenly clutched my relative by the arm and said :

“ Where did that hearse come from ? ”

“ What hearse ? ” my relative asked.

“ Why, that hearse just in front of us,” Jones replied. “ It was nowhere in sight a minute ago, and I did not see it pass us. How did it get there ? ”

My relative laughed. “ You are dreaming,” he said. “ There’s no hearse. Nothing.”

Jones relapsed into silence, until they had passed the haunted house, when he turned to my relative and said :

“ The hearse went in there. I saw it pass through the gateway and go up the drive. Someone will die there very soon.” And this proved true. As the result of an accident that occurred that same afternoon someone died in the house that very night.

To return to my mother. She was never really happy while she lived in the house, and it was a considerable relief to her when her family moved elsewhere. She had another experience of an even more startling nature at an old country house in Worcestershire.

She was sitting alone in the drawing-room one afternoon, between the lights, when something attracted her attention to the floor just in front of her, and she saw the carpet suddenly become violently agitated, as if by a strong gust of wind blowing under it. She glanced up at the window, but the ivy clustering against it hung limp and motionless, and not a leaf stirred. Indeed, the day had been unusually soft and mild for the season—it was late autumn. Then, she

looked down again at the floor, and was immeasurably thrilled. Coming up through the carpet was a head, a human head covered with a mass of long, black matted hair, obviously a woman's. Up and up, very slowly, it came, until my mother saw a white face with two wide-open, dark, glassy eyes fixed on her. My mother tried to scream, but could not, for terror held her spellbound; and as she sat, silent and helpless, the figure kept on rising through the floor, until, finally, it stood fully revealed before her—the apparition of a woman in an old-fashioned white dress, with a yellow shawl round her shoulders and an infant in her arms. With its eyes still fixed on my mother, it turned slightly round, and then glided away in the direction of the antique fireplace, where it eventually vanished, apparently amalgamating with the wall.

The spell then broken, my mother quickly pulled herself together, and, springing to her feet, ran out of the room, to look for her hostess. The latter expressed great concern, as well as interest.

“I ought to have told you,” she said, “that this house, and the drawing-room in particular, is haunted, but the ghosts so seldom take it into their heads to visit us, that I did not think it necessary.” She then told my mother that, according to tradition, a gipsy woman and her baby were once enticed into the house and murdered, their bodies being buried afterwards on the premises.

Naturally this explanation proved a great shock to my mother, and she was so upset that she announced her intention of going home the next day—a very

wise proceeding on her part, since, only an hour or so before she left, she encountered the same apparition, once more, in another part of the house.

Needless to say, perhaps, she bade the place a final good-bye, for nothing on earth would ever induce her to go near it again.

Lest it should not be obvious to all, let me here state that my object in narrating my mother's experiences is simply to show that if the psychic faculty exists, she undoubtedly had it, and that being so I, most probably, inherit it from her, as well as from my father. At the same time, I do not think that the seeing and hearing of psychic manifestations depend solely on the possession of the psychic faculty. Undoubtedly some people do often see and hear ghostly phenomena, whilst others never see or hear, but I do not believe the experiencing of such phenomena is actually dependent on any power within us. I think it quite a feasible supposition that ghosts, or spirits, or whatever else you like to call them, can appear to any of us to whom they wish to appear, both when and where they will, irrespective of any force, psychic or otherwise, we may or may not possess. In short, I believe that, in all probability, the power lies entirely with the Other Side, and that, possibly, ghosts themselves are more or less dependent on some controlling superphysical force or forces more powerful than they are themselves.

Why they will manifest themselves to some of us and not to others may be due to a variety of causes. In some instances it may be due to something that happened either to ourselves in a prior existence, or

to our forbears, something which either we or our forbears did, or were associated with, and which would cause certain of the denizens of Ghostland to take a peculiar interest in us. Also, the reason ghosts manifest themselves to some of us and not to others may be because some of us are deemed most suitable to redress a wrong, or bring to light some secret, or propagate the knowledge of things superphysical and a life of sorts after physical dissolution.

Or, again, the reason may be entirely in our personality, in something about us, individually, that especially pleases or displeases the Unknown. There may be other causes, too. However, I have already said enough with regard to the so-called psychic faculty.

I will now begin my life story.

Soon after I was born, my father, who was a country evangelical vicar, decided to go for a holiday to Palestine with a fellow-parson. Before going he remarked (half in jest and half in earnest) to my mother, who, unlike the majority of modern British wives, was devoted to her husband:

“If anything happens to me, while I am away, you will know.”

“Oh, don’t appear in spirit form, Hal,” my mother responded. “You know I have such a horror of ghosts.”

“Very well then,” my father said; “should the unexpected happen, I won’t let you see me, but you will hear.”

He went away, and on the ship he sailed in met a certain Colonel K., who persuaded him to give

up his idea of going to Palestine and to accompany him, instead, to Abyssinia. My father was a lover of big-game shooting. He had hunted bears and other wild animals in the mountain fastnesses of the United States, and the prospect, which the Colonel held out to him, of hunting lions and leopards in the wilds of Abyssinia, proved irresistibly alluring.

Still, he did not altogether like the Colonel, and according to his diary, a copy of which is in my possession, he had at least one stand-up fight with him. Leaving his old friend, the parson, at Alexandria, however, my father set out with Colonel K. *en route* for Abyssinia. The following are a few extracts from his diary:—

*17th March.* A very dull evening. I have my grave doubts of Col. K. He is so impudent.

*18th March.* *En route* for Jeddo in company with Maghera Tub, K., and Mr B.

*25th March.* K. and B. go to Assouakim. I wish I had never come with K.

*26th March.* Had a sharp dispute with Col. K. In the end the Col. promises to give me security before we leave the ship. Start for Massowah. Anchor off a reef twenty miles from Suakim. Have a quarrel on board.

*28th March.* In quarantine. Write to Munsinger Bey. (This Munsinger Bey was a very sinister character.)

*29th March.* We are to live in a house promised by Hassan. (This Hassan turned out to be a man of a most disreputable past. More than one crime was attributed to him.) Another row.

Here the diary ended.<sup>1</sup>

And now I must shift the scene to the house where my mother and the rest of the family were living at the time.

It was the early evening of 1st April, just about twilight, and one of my sisters left the drawing-room, with the intention of going upstairs to her bedroom, to fetch something; but, on reaching the landing, outside her room, something attracted her attention to the staircase leading to the top storey, and, glancing up it, she perceived what appeared to be a spherical light, resting on the balustrade that formed part of the top landing. Then, as she stared at it, wondering what it could be, it suddenly took a definite shape, which she soon perceived was a head—a head covered with a tangled mass of tow-coloured hair. The features did not resemble those of any existing race of human beings—the proportions were so queer and unusual—but seemed rather to belong to a species that might have existed long centuries ago. With no flesh on the face, and the skin drawn tight over the bones, it looked as if it had lain for ages in the tomb, and only just been resurrected. Worst of all, perhaps, were the eyes. They were pale and obliquely set, and, as they met my sister's gaze, they filled with an expression of the most diabolical glee. So far the thing had inspired wonder rather than fear, but when it began to leer, which it soon did, my sister turned in terror

<sup>1</sup> It was subsequently found by a servant of one of the Consuls at Massowah, in the pocket of an old coat belonging to my father, and sent home, with one or two other of his effects.

and fled. She told no one about it then, but made a drawing of it from memory, which proved of great interest in after years.

Later on in the evening, my mother and the servants were much startled at hearing a series of appalling sounds (coming, at first, apparently, from under one of the windows, and then, from within the house itself) which, if they resembled anything human at all, could best be likened to the agonised cries of a woman being cruelly murdered. A thorough search of the premises was immediately made, both inside and out, but nothing was found that could in any way account for the phenomena, which my mother knew all along was the death-warning cry of the Banshee.

The following night, and every night for six successive weeks, a voice and footsteps, believed by those who heard them to be my father's, were audible in various parts of the house. These disturbances always commenced about midnight and lasted, off and on, till about one o'clock, when they invariably and abruptly ceased. At the time they first occurred my mother had no other intimation, saving the cry of the Banshee, that any harm had befallen my father, but, after they had been going on for a week or more, she received tidings from someone at Mas-sowah, saying he had been robbed and murdered on 2nd April, close to the village of Arkiko.<sup>1</sup>

Being barely six months old I knew nothing of all this at the time it occurred, but, from the moment I

<sup>1</sup> Reference to his death may be seen in a work entitled *The Oriental Zigzag*, by Charles Hamilton, published in 1875 by Chapman & Hall.

first heard of it, I became deeply interested in the Supernatural, and to it, chiefly, may be traced my firm determination to make a lifetime study of the occult. The first ghost I actually saw appeared to me when I was five, just after I had been put to bed in the early evening. In fact, the door of my room had hardly closed on my nurse before it slowly opened and a strange figure softly and surreptitiously came in. It was about five feet ten in height, nude, and covered all over with yellow spots. It had a big, queerly proportioned head and light eyes, that regarded me with an expression which utterly baffles description. It was so entirely enigmatical and perplexing.

I was not at all frightened, I was merely amazed, for the thing did not appear to be hostile but only ominous. Young though I was, I felt it was there with a meaning, and that it had something to do with my fate. I have thought so ever since. It remained stationary, gazing at me for some seconds, and then left the room, in the same noiseless, stealthy manner, as it entered it. I have never seen it since. When I narrated this experience, a few years later, to an old gardener we employed, he asked me if I had been sitting under any trees before I saw the phenomenon. I told him I had, and he said :

“ Well, that might possibly account for it, leastways if the trees were silver birches or very old elms. Listen.”

He then narrated the story to be found in my next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### SOME STRANGE TREE HAUNTINGS

“**N**EAR my old 'ome in 'Erefordshire,” he began, “was a field with a cluster of very old elms in it. It was not a very nice spot ; years ago a murder 'ad took place there, and people never went near it, unless they were obliged. Well, one moonlight hevenin', I was passin' through this field with my old dad and a man we knew called Thomas 'Olloway, when I saw somethin' suddenly come howt from under the branches of the elm-trees and stand and stare at us. The moonlight was full on it, but for all that I could not see it very distinctly. It was all dim and 'azy-like. At the time I could see that its body was somethin' like a man's, only the arms were much longer than 'uman bein's, and the 'ands and feet different. It was very tall and thin, and 'ad nuthin' on it in the way of clothes. I couldn't distinguish the face ; it was all a kind of a blur. I was gazing 'ard at it, wondering what on hearth it could be, when my father suddenly grabbed me by the harm, and said in a voice I scarcely knew, it was so 'oarse and hagitated : ‘ 'Urry, 'urry, it's time we were 'ome, boy.’ Neither 'e nor 'Olloway huttered another sound, till they'd got out of the field and were in the lane leading to our village. 'Olloway then

exclaimed : ‘ Did you see it, Ben ? ’ ‘ I saw summut,’ my old dad replied, ‘ is teeth chattering, though ‘e tried to pull ‘isself together. ‘ So did I,’ ‘Olloway said, looking over ‘is shoulder in a way that made my blood run cold, ‘ and it was the very same figure as I seed that hevenin’ I crossed the field with poor old John ‘Arris. ‘Arris seed it very plain, and the next marning, just before seven o’clock, ‘e ‘anged ‘isself. You remember ? ’

“ ‘ Course I do,’ my old dad replied, testily. ‘ But what’s the use of rememberin’ a thing like that now ? ’

“ ‘ Only because I ‘ope no ‘arm will come of it,’ ‘Olloway answered. ‘ I wish I ‘adn’t seed it so plain, that’s all. Mebbe you didn’t.’

“ My father made no reply, but ‘e grabbed ‘old of me tighter still, and made me run to keep up with ‘im. The next day, about noon, Thomas ‘Olloway drowned ‘isself in a pool just be’ind ‘is cottage, and I ‘eard my old dad a-tellin’ my mother that it was all on account of the thing we saw standin’ under the elms in the ‘aunted field.”

This was one of the old gardener’s stories, and I can see and hear him now, telling it as he sat on our lawn-roller, munching his midday bread and cheese, and taking occasional sips of tea out of a big tin can that stood on the ground by his side.

Another of his stories may interest my readers as much as it interested me. He told it, as nearly as I remember, as follows :

“ ‘ There was an old feller in our village,” he said, “ named Jarge Brown. Well, when I first knew Jarge ‘e was a regular wild ‘un. ‘E drank, and swore,

simply shockin', and more than that 'e poached, went after the pheasants and 'ares what belonged to the squire, and anything else 'e could lay 'ands on. Everyone in the neighbourhood knew 'im and declared that some day 'e'd be 'ung. Well, one day 'is 'ole character changed, and it come about like this. One marning one of the village children, 'Enery 'Erbert was 'is name, came to our 'ouse in a great flurry and told my dad that Jarge Brown wanted to see 'im at once. 'What does 'e want to see me about?' says dad. 'I dunno,' 'Erbert replied. 'E 'ollared out to me as I was a-passing and asked me to call in 'ere and tell yer to go and see 'im as soon as yer could. He says 'e's in great trouble.'

" 'Looks as if 'e's been doin' somethin' 'e didn't ought,' my mother remarked. 'If yer go, just be careful.'

" 'Oh, I'll go,' my old dad said. 'I'm hanxious to know what's 'appened.' Then 'e set off, and when 'is marning's work at the saw-pit was done, 'e came back. I noticed 'e was very pale and silent, not a bit like 'isself, and it weren't long before my mother noticed it too, and asked 'im what 'e was thinkin' about. 'Why,' 'e said, 'I was thinkin' of Jarge Brown. When I called at 'is place this marning, I found 'im in bed, looking worried and scared to death.'

" 'What's 'appened, Jarge?' I said, seatin' myself right down by 'is side; 'got into trouble?'

" 'Yes,' 'e replied, 'is eyes a-rollin' about in 'is 'ead, as if they'd darned well drop out, 'but not the ord'nary kind of trouble. Listen, and I'll tell yer.

Last night I was in the White Lion 'aving a glass or two, and I didn't leave till lockin'-up time. I then come on 'ere, got my gun, and set off into the wood in search of a rabbit or 'are. P'r'aps it was the drink—I can't say—but as I was a-tryin' to climb over the stone wall by the brook, I slipped back'ards and struck my 'ead against one of them silver birches. I suppose I must 'ave got concussion, or somethin' of the sort, because for a long time, or at hany rate what seemed a long time, I knew nuthin'. Then, all of a sudden, I felt somethin' a-shinin' on my face, and when I come-to a bit more, the moon was 'igh up, pourin' its beams right down on me, and I saw that I wasn't a-lyin' down but a-sittin' hup, with my back propped agin a birch-tree. Says I to myself, 'It's about time I was a-lookin' after one of them 'ares or rabbits, for it must be near time them keepers were about,' and I tried to get hup, but couldn't. Somethin' was a-holdin' me back. I persevered, tried with all my might, but, I tell yer, I couldn't move a muscle. Then, while I was still a-fightin' to free myself, a voice just behind me said, very clear and distinct: 'It ain't no good, Jarge Brown. Your time is hup. You belong to us now, and you'll never leave this spot.' Then I felt myself suddenly dragged back'ards, right into the tree, and the moonlight and everything else faded away, and all was as black as pitch. 'Where am I?' I 'ollared out. 'What 'as 'appened?'

““““You're where your ways and 'abits 'as led you, Jarge Brown,' the same voice answered. 'You're with the things that live in this 'ere wood, and 'ere you will remain.'

“ “ “ As these words were spoke, it seemed to get darker and darker, and an awful feelin’ of ’orror and ’elplessness came over me. I felt buried alive, sealed up in a coffin right down in the guts of the herth, away from every living cratur. I thought of the sun, and the moon, and this ’ere cottage, and the road outside, and the White Lion, and all the folk I knew, and the idee of never seein’ any of ’em agen, and of being cut off from all and everybody, not for an hour or two, or even for a day, but for ever—ever I tells yer—made me well-nigh mad. Then I fell to a-tryin’ to pray, but I couldn’t remember the Lord’s Prayer, what I larned at Sunday school, when I was a lad—not more than just the beginning of it, and the thing that ’ad got ’old of me laughed. It was a laugh, I tell yer, as made my blood curdle. But I could see nuthin’ ! I could only feel somethin’ queer and ’orrible close beside me. I cried to God to ’elp me and let me go free, and breathe the fresh air once more, under the stars and moon, if only for a few hours, and presently the voice spoke agen :

“ “ “ “ All right, Jarge Brown,’ it said, ‘ all right, if you promise to come to this tree, at midnight, exactly a year ’ence—the 24th of June, remember—you may go.’

“ “ “ Well, I promised, William ; wouldn’t you ’ave done the same ? And directly I said the words my brain grew all confused, there was a sudden buzz, buzz, and a whirl. I lost consciousness, and, when I come to myself, I was sittin’ on the grass by the wall with my back agin the birch.”

“ “ I told ’im,’ my father remarked, ‘ that it was

only a dream, and there was nowt to worrit about, but Jarge would 'ave none of it.

“ “No,” 'e said, “it weren't a dream. It were too clear and rale-like for that. I've bin and promised my soul to the Old 'Un, or 'is double, and there's nothin' can save me.” 'E then fell a-cryin', and a-carryin' on dreadful,' my old dad said, ‘and I could say nowt to comfort 'im, so I come away.’

“ ‘'E's mad. 'Tis the drink that's done it,' my mother said.

“ ‘No, 'e's sober right enough,' my dad replied”—here the old gardener set down his empty tea can, which he had been nursing for some while on his knees, and replenished his pipe from his baccy pouch—“ ‘and I'm not sure myself whether there ain't summat in it.’ My mother only laughed; but my dad shook 'is 'ead, and I saw 'e was in earnest. Well, from that time onnards there was a wonderful change in Jarge Brown. 'E gave up swearin' and drinkin', and poachin', and became quite a reformed character, attendin' church regler twice on Sundays and workin' steady a-week-days at 'is proper trade of cobblin'—there weren't no better cobbler in the country than Jarge. All the while 'e was leadin' this noo life, 'owever, 'e kep an eye on the calendar, and was a-countin' the weeks and days till the 24th of June.

“At last it drew nigh—March, April, May—all passed by in turn, and then there come June. I shall never forget the hevenin' of the 24th. My dad 'ad met Jarge the day before, and Jarge 'ad said to 'im, quite cheerful-like :

“ ‘Only twenty-four more hours, but I think I shall

get through it all right.' The 24th was one of them warm days we never seems to get now. Regler blazin' 'ot from first thing in the marnin' till the sun went down, and even then it was stiflin' and oppressive. When I got into bed I couldn't sleep, for try 'ow I would, I couldn't 'elp thinkin' about Jarge Brown and that thing inside the tree that 'e 'ad bound 'imself to by promise. What would 'appen? Would 'e survive the night all right, or would the thing come and fetch 'im. Then I fell to thinkin' what the thing was like, and I suddenly caught sight of a dark shadder on the wall, near my bed, that made me duck under the clothes and lie there a-shiverin' and shakin' till marnin'.

"I don't know to this day what that shadder was. Well, when the marnin' comes, I gets out of bed, and the first thing I asks my dad is, 'Ow's Jarge Brown? 'As yer 'eard any news of 'im?' My dad 'adn't, and 'e didn't 'ear anything till that hevenin', about five o'clock, when 'e come runnin' 'ome with a white, scared face, and says :

"'Mary'—that was my mother's name—'it's all hup with Jarge.'

"'Why, whatever does yer mean?' my mother answers.

"'I mean,' says dad, 'that 'e was found about three o'clock cum this afternoon, lyin' in the wood, between the wall 'e told me about and the silver birch—dead. 'E was at the White Lion Inn drinking 'eavily agen last night, and it is thought 'e wandered into the wood in a state of 'opeless intoxication, and fell on 'is 'ead, fatally injurin' 'isself in tryin' to get

over the wall near the birch-trees. I 'eard it said as them as found 'im declares they never saw anything so 'orrible as the look on 'is face; it were just as if the last thing as 'e'd set eyes on was the Old Gentleman 'isself.' ”

The old gardener then concluded his story, expressing the opinion that the last thing “ Jarge ” really did see was the devil; and so emphatic was he in his belief, that for some time afterwards I never passed an elm or silver birch tree without thinking of what might be hidden inside it. However, whether or not the apparition, *à propos* of which the above stories were narrated to me, had anything to do with trees I cannot possibly say.

Certainly there were trees in plenty all around that house, and although they were neither elms nor birches, I had, as I have stated, been sitting under them very shortly before I saw the ghost with the yellow spots. I should, perhaps, add that I am quite sure trees do attract and harbour all kinds of spirits. The Downs at Clifton, Bristol, are covered with trees, many of them elms, and there is not a more suicidal place in England. Apart from the number of people who have jumped over the famous Suspension Bridge, and I believe I am right in saying there have been at least seventy, there have been many suicides off the rocks near the Bridge and under the trees on the adjacent grassy sward—in fact at various spots all the way along to the sea walls. Also, there have been at least two murders, and, oddly enough, in places almost facing one another, on either side of the river.

In the summer of 1857 John William Beale murdered

Charlotte Pugsley in the Leigh Woods, on the Somerset side of the Avon, and on the evening of 18th September 1855 a child called Melissa Payne was murdered in what is known as the gully, on the Gloucestershire side of the same river. Both spots in those days were surrounded with old elm-trees.

Now the Leigh Woods murder was ordinary enough, the sort of tragedy one frequently reads of in the newspapers, but the gully murder belongs to a different category.

It was one of those terrible crimes that are invariably associated with woods and other lonely spots, and the murderer was never brought to book. Well now, were all these tragedies, the suicides and murders, merely a matter of chance, or can they be accounted for by some unseen sinister and highly malignant influence that hovers around the Downs and tempts people of a certain temperament to deeds of extreme violence?

With the Yarmouth beach and Crumbles crimes in my mind I am inclined to say Yes, they can be accounted for by some invisible, antagonistic, supernatural force. The gully was certainly believed, for a time at any rate, to have been haunted after the murder of Melissa Payne, and, in my opinion, it is very likely to have been haunted before.

But I must now quit Clifton and the gully and return to the thing I saw by my bedside when a child. It may have been something associated with the trees that then stood near the house, or it may have been attracted to the spot by something else—by a pool of water adjoining the trees, for still water also, at

times, attracts ghosts; or by something that once happened on the site of the house—not necessarily a deed of violence, for the thing did not strike me as being particularly evil, but, as I said before, merely grotesque and extraordinary; or by something in the construction of the house itself, the loft for example, for in my experience lofts often do attract a certain species of ghost, which, for want of a better name, I term Elemental or Neutarian. However, no matter what the nature or origin of the ghostly thing I saw, I am convinced it was objective, and it excited my curiosity to know more about the world or plane to which it belonged. Frequently after this, in the same house, I saw other ghostly phenomena, and as I have learned since, others in the house saw ghostly phenomena too, though only, as I did, at odd intervals.

On one occasion I saw two figures, to all appearances quite ordinary human beings, come up the path leading to the house and disappear in the direction of the back door, upon which, immediately afterwards, there was a series of loud knockings. Curiosity prompting me, I ran to a window overlooking the back door and peeped out, but, to my astonishment, no one was there, although the rapping still continued. The servants at the time were upstairs, and when I asked them why they did not answer the door they replied: "What was the good! There was no one there. We know that knocking," and I could get nothing more out of them. Now, knocking is a by no means uncommon spirit phenomenon. It seems to be one of the comparatively few methods used by the Unknown to indicate its presence. Again and again, in the

course of my life, I have both experienced it myself, and come across others who have encountered it, and, candidly, I do not like it. In quite a new house I once rented in St Ives, Cornwall—I was the first occupier of it—I was awakened one night by a noise in the passage outside my room. I recognised the sound of footsteps, but they were very curious footsteps, a continued click, click, click suggesting that they were those of a person wearing very high-heeled shoes.

As there was no one else in the building at the time, excepting my aged housekeeper, you can imagine I felt no little surprise. The sounds came steadily on, along the bare boards, till they halted outside my door. There was then a period of the most intense silence, during which I instinctively felt something was standing there listening, and then a loud knock on the top panel of the door, which was close to my bed. After that there was another absolute hush. I was startled, I confess, and it took me a few seconds to pull myself together, but when I had acquired sufficient self-composure I got up, and going to the door threw it wide open. There was no one there—nothing—only the moonlight pouring in a broad white stream through the window opposite me, against which a few sprays of ivy tapped very gently. I went to the balustrade on the landing and peered over it down into the well of the house. All was still there, and, beyond a barely audible jarring of the doors and windows occasioned by the night breeze, I could hear nothing.

Puzzled, and not a little apprehensive, for I felt that the loud knock on my door must have some significance, I went back to bed. Two days later I

received word to say that my uncle, Colonel John Vyse O'Donnell, of County Limerick, was dead. He had died, as nearly as I could reckon, at the very moment I had heard the knocking. Prior to the death of another relative of mine, my wife and I heard the same loud knocking on the door of our bedroom in London, and on this occasion there was no one in the flat but ourselves.

## CHAPTER III

### MORE UNCANNY HAPPENINGS IN MY CHILDHOOD

**W**ITH regard to phantom knockings, I experienced a most curious case of this kind of haunting in my early youth—that is to say, when I was out for a walk, one day, with my old nurse, in a village in Northamptonshire. She took me to a cottage occupied by a Mrs Smith, a native of those parts, who had all her life, up to the time she was too old to work, been in the service of my mother's cousin, with whom I was then staying. The cottage, a tiny one, stood on the high road, in a very lonely isolated spot, and it seemed to me to be entirely overshadowed by the rows of gigantic elms that lined the road close to it.

Well, while the three of us, Mrs Smith, my old nurse and I, were having tea, there was suddenly a loud knock at the door. To my surprise Mrs Smith took no notice of it, but went on with her duties as hostess, quite placidly.

“There was someone a-rapping, Mrs Smith,” my old nurse remarked.

“Is there?” Mrs Smith ejaculated, “I didn't hear no one.” Then, raising her voice, she called out: “Come in.” But there was no response, and the door remained shut. Presently there was a second knock,

just a loud single knock like the first. I looked at my nurse, and she looked at me; then we both looked at old Mrs Smith, who, munching away at her bread and butter, obviously had not heard it. I opened my mouth to make some remark, but was interrupted by yet a third knock, which, I remember thinking at the time, had a very strange and hollow sound. At this juncture my old nurse got up and going to the door opened it a few inches and peeped out.

"Did you hear another knock?" Mrs Smith exclaimed, holding her cup of tea in mid-air.

"I fancied I did," my old nurse said, coming back to her seat with a queer expression on her face, "but it must 'ave been only fancy, for there's no one there."

When we left the cottage, and were wending our way home, she said:

"I'm terrible much worritted about them knocks, I am."

"Why? Who was it?" I asked.

"It wasn't nobody," she said; "that's where the trouble comes in. It was somethin' Supernatural, and I'm terrible afeared somethin's goin' to 'appen to Mrs Smith. You see, she didn't 'ear 'em 'erself. But there, you don't understand; I oughtn't to 'a' told you."

What she surmised speedily came true. The very next day poor Mrs Smith had a stroke, and she died within the week.

My mother-in-law also experienced similar knockings many years ago. She was sitting in the nursery one afternoon with her children when, suddenly, there was a loud knock at the door. She called out

"Come in," but there was no reply, only another knock, and soon afterwards a third, whereupon she got up at once, and going to the door flung it wide open. No one was there, and a day or two later she heard of the death of a near and dear relative. I know of yet another case, a case that occurred in an old manor-house not very far from Market Harborough. One evening the owner, his wife, and two daughters were sitting in the large flag-paved hall, talking, when there were three loud knocks, in rapid succession, at the door at the back of the house, that opened on to the lawn. The youngest daughter immediately went to see who it was, but no one was there; and all she saw was a wide expanse of lawn with the dark shadows of elms and larches waving to and fro across it. All heard the sounds, saving the owner of the house himself, and he died quite suddenly a day or two later. There is something very mysterious in the number three. The Unknown often chooses it to prognosticate the advent of death—why, no one knows. So-called experts in numerology have, of course, attempted an explanation, but their dictums strike one as being singularly futile.

While on the subject of knocks, I may be pardoned, perhaps, if I depart for a moment from my own experiences to quote a case that was told me by someone intimately acquainted with the principals in it. It relates to the Supernatural in an actual crime that occurred in America towards the latter end of the last century; but I have had, of course, to substitute fictitious names for real ones.

One evening, about six o'clock, a carpenter named

Weaver was sitting in his little shop in one of the suburbs of a North American town, when a girl suddenly burst in, breathless and without a hat.

"I'm Miss Montague's companion," she said, as soon as she could speak, "and something very strange has just happened. Miss Montague was sitting, as she always does on fine days, by her open bedroom window, and just as I ran up to see if she wanted anything, there was a loud knock at the front door. Supposing it was her nephew, who called to see her this morning, and said he would come back again in a little while, I hurried downstairs, and, as I did so, whoever it was rapped again, two very loud deliberate raps. I threw open the door, but, to my surprise, there was no one there. Thinking someone might have done it for a bit of fun, I went out into the road and looked around on all sides, but I could see no one, and there is no doorway or any other place where anyone could have concealed themselves for some considerable distance. Well, as I was standing just outside, the front door suddenly slammed to violently, though there was scarcely a breath of wind, and I found myself shut out. It was of no use calling to Miss Montague, as she is stone-deaf, and I have tried in vain to get help from our neighbours, who are all out. Can you help me in any way?"

Weaver looked at her thoughtfully. She was neatly, even well dressed, and with an appealing look in her blue-grey eyes she was anything but plain. Also, she had white and delicately fashioned hands that did not appear to have ever done any really hard work.

"What do you want me to do for you, missie?" he

inquired, laying down his pipe and slowly rising to his feet.

“Slip back a catch of one of the windows, so that I can get in,” the girl replied. “I have been out nearly half-an-hour, and Miss Montague will be wondering what on earth has become of me.”

Telling her he would do as she wished, Weaver fetched a ladder, and the two set out together. Weaver, whom the girl seemed to have fascinated, noticed that her lips were compressed and her long tapering fingers, the most beautiful he had ever seen, kept tightening convulsively on the palms.

“The poor gal is wondering what that old cat, Miss Montague, will say to her when she returns,” he said to himself.

When they reached the house, he found that all the windows on the first floor were open, so that there was, of course, no need to slip back any catch.

“Will you climb up,” the girl said, “and then let me in at the front door? I can’t mount a ladder, I turn so giddy.”

Anxious to oblige the young lady in every way he could, Weaver at once acquiesced, and mounting the ladder soon found himself in the house. It struck him as almost uncannily silent, but fancying he heard a slight noise on his way downstairs he paused for a moment, to listen.

The noise was repeated, and this time it sounded like a whine, the whine of some animal in distress. Now it so happened that Weaver was very fond of animals, and, thinking that it might be a dog or a cat in pain, he at once went in the direction of the

kitchen premises, from which the sounds seemed to proceed.

When he reached the doorway of the front kitchen he received a shock. In the waning daylight he saw the body of a woman lying huddled up on the floor, and close to it a small black dog moaning and whining piteously. He approached the body, and then recoiled in horror. It was an elderly woman in a lilac print dress. Her grey hair was besprinkled with blood, and her throat was cut from ear to ear.

The dog was also badly wounded, one of its paws being nearly severed, but it was still alive. Weaver stood for some seconds, like one in a dream, staring at the horrible sight before him, and then, yielding to a wild panic, he rushed to the front door, and almost fell into the arms of the pretty girl. In a few words he told her what had happened, and without waiting to hear what she had to say, he ran off to fetch the police. When they arrived, they discovered some startling facts. To begin with, it was obvious that robbery was not the motive of the crime. Nothing in the house was touched. The woman, who proved to be Martha Care, general servant to Miss Montague, had, in all probability, been struck on the back of the head with some blunt instrument, and the blow not taking effect, she had turned round and struggled with her assailant, evidences of a desperate fight being seen in the overturned chairs and broken crockery. However, she was eventually overpowered and murdered, the murderer cutting her throat, and, at the same time, slashing at the poor dog that had valiantly come to her assistance. At least, that was the supposition

of the police. But what was the motive? At the inquest the pretty girl, a Miss Melrose, told the same story that she had told Weaver.

She also very reluctantly informed the Coroner that when young Mr Charles Montague, the old lady's nephew, left the house that morning, after seeing his aunt, the expression on his face showed he was very angry. His aunt, she went on to say, had on several occasions expressed strong disapproval of his betting and other fast habits, and had even hinted that, unless he mended his ways, she would disinherit him. Then, in the course of her examination, she let slip the fact that Charles had a key to the house and often used to let himself in.

"As a matter of fact, you believe it was Charles Montague who gave those three knocks you spoke about?" the Coroner interposed.

"Am I obliged to answer?" Miss Melrose said in a low voice.

"In the interests of justice you are," was the reply.

"Then I do," Miss Melrose faltered.

"But, if he had a key of the house, why did he knock?" the Coroner queried—"unless, of course, after letting himself into the house, he had knocked, in order to get you out of it. In that case it was he who shut the door on you. But then, having got you out of the way, why didn't he kill his aunt as well as Martha Care?"

These were questions which neither the witness nor anyone else could answer. The case created a very considerable sensation. Some thought Charles Montague was the guilty party, and some a stranger,

possibly someone with whom Martha Care had been acquainted, but of actual clues there were none, saving the discovery by a young detective engaged on the case of a gold ear-ring of a peculiar design, lodged in a fold of the murdered woman's dress. To this discovery the older officials, however, having made up their minds that Charles Montague had done the deed, attached no importance whatever.

Charles was arrested, and tried, and would have been executed, had it not been for an unexpected alibi at the last moment. Consequently, he was acquitted, and the murder was forthwith consigned to the category of undiscovered crimes. Then, again, the unlooked-for happened. About a year afterwards a very remarkable series of hotel thefts occurred in the same town, and so cleverly were they carried out, that it was a long time before anyone was even suspected. At length, however, suspicion attached itself to a stylishly dressed young lady. Now the detective who had charge of the case happened to be the same detective who had found the ear-ring in the murder case a year ago, and was one of the smartest men in the force. He had tracked the young lady suspected of the hotel thefts to her lair, and having entered her room one day, after watching her out, he was searching her boxes, when he alighted upon something that gave him the thrill of his life. It was a gold ear-ring, the exact counterpart of the one he had in his possession.

In an instant he resolved on his course of action. Concealing himself in the wardrobe, he waited till the young woman came home, and, as soon as she was in the room, he sprang out and charged her with both

the hotel thefts and the murder of Martha Care. Whenever he had seen her on previous occasions, this stylishly dressed young lady had been so heavily veiled that the young detective had never even caught a glimpse of her face, but now, upon seeing her without her veil, he recognised her instantly. She was Miss Melrose, Miss Montague's pretty companion ; and thus taken completely by surprise she confessed. With regard to the murder, she said that both Miss Montague and Martha Care had been excessively unkind to her, and that, after killing Martha Care in a fit of ungovernable temper, she had run upstairs, with the intention of killing Miss Montague too, for the latter had just been calling her some very choice names, and had threatened to discharge her, when someone knocked three times in rapid succession on the street door. She then repeated the story she had told the Coroner and the jury at the trial of Charles Montague, only adding that she was convinced that, although there was not a breath of wind stirring, the knocking was due to some supernatural agency that was determined to prevent her killing Miss Montague. Now American juries, Canadian as well as Yankee, are extremely merciful where women are concerned—a fact of which Miss Melrose was doubtless aware, for she kept glancing appealingly at them with her pretty blue eyes, whilst she displayed to the utmost her slim white fingers, with their highly polished nails, and her small, well-shaped feet, encased, as they always were, in very high-heeled, patent-leather shoes.

She got off, the jury finding her guilty of manslaughter only, committed under excessive provocation.

After her acquittal she was said to have been immediately inundated with offers of marriage, and it was rumoured that she selected for her husband the man reputed to be the richest. However, what she subsequently did and what subsequently became of her does not concern us. What does interest us in her story is the question of the Supernatural. Were those knocks and the slamming to of the door, provided her tale was true, and it was generally believed to be true, mere coincidences, brought about by some remarkably swift-footed passer-by and some unperceived gust of wind, respectively, or does a whole philosophy touching on another world and powers, utterly beyond our present ken, underlie them? I incline to the latter view.

## CHAPTER IV

### IRISH AND OTHER FAIRIES

THE subject of ghostly knockings has so engrossed me, that I have devoted to it more space than I intended. I must now pass on to the other kinds of superphysical phenomena with which I was familiar as a child. In the south and south-west of Ireland there are still what are popularly known as fairies. Now the Irish fairy differs just as much from the fairy depicted in certain alleged photographs taken of fairies, as does genuine ghostly knocking from the knocking one hears at so-called spiritistic séances: the one is the *bonâ-fide* article and the other the sham and spurious. The ordinary Irish fairy, locally believed only to be seen by those who have at least three generations of real Celtic blood in them, is but a dim and shadowy entity. I feel I cannot improve upon the description given of it in an article by my relative Maunsell Vize,<sup>1</sup> whose family have lived on Irish soil for several centuries.

“Up to the present,” he writes, “I had never seen more than three or four fairies at a time, but on this occasion there were a score or more, all gliding about, in and out, silent as statues, and ever with the same extraordinary automatic-like movements.

<sup>1</sup> See *Occult Review*, December 1922.

The light that I had seen from a distance I now perceived was a kind of phosphorescent glow, which they seemed to emit from all over them. They wore filmy garments of a rather sombre shade of green or grey, and were pale, with very pronounced and grotesque features." That is what Maunsell Vize says in his extraordinarily interesting account of them, and, as you will see, the fairy he describes does not tally in the least with the ridiculous chocolate-box type of winged creatures seen in the alleged photographs of fairies. My first experience of them was very much the same as Maunsell Vize's. In my bedroom, in our house in Ireland, was a big antique wardrobe, and on it, regularly every evening, the fairies used to come and glide about, as if going through the evolutions of some very quaint, fantastic dance. They were tiny things, at the most not more than a foot and a half high, and very shadowy and silent.

The occasion of my first introduction to them is fixed very fast in my memory. There was no one in the house, saving myself and our old cook, who was downstairs in the basement, and I was sitting in one corner of my room reading, before getting into bed, when something caused me to look up, and I saw on the top of the wardrobe several queer shadowy forms moving noiselessly about. Thinking something must be wrong with my eyes, I closed them, but when I opened them again the figures were still there, and they now seemed to resemble human beings, excepting for the fact that their faces appeared to be singularly odd and grotesque. I had a dog by my side

at the time, and when it suddenly began to bark, and evince signs of unrest, they all vanished. I ran downstairs at once and told the old cook of my strange experience, and, instead of laughing, as I more than half thought she would, she said :

“Shure, an’ you’ve seen the fairies. I’ve seen them many times myself about the house and garden, and ’tis no harm they’ll be doing you, unless you spake or interfere with them, and then they’ll bring you bad luck, ochone.” She then went on to tell me that leprechauns and pookahs (the commonest type of Irish fairy) were seldom seen in Ireland now, because nearly all the Celtic Irish people had gone.

“When I was a girl,” she said, laying down the bowl of potatoes she was about to wash and dropping into a hard-bottomed wooden chair—“shure it’s a good many years ago, Master Elliot—I saw a leprechaun close to the cottage where I lived. It was in the gloaming, and I was crossing a field with my mother, when she suddenly came to a dead halt. ‘Look, look!’ she exclaimed, and clutching hold of me by the arm, she pointed to a solitary elm that stood in the middle of a broad, open space of grass. I looked towards the spot she pointed at, and there, glory be to God, I saw a figure, maybe about as high as this table,” and she tapped the kitchen table with the long, lean, and I fear none too clean, forefinger of her right hand. “It wore a red roundabout, red breeches, and black stockings, but it had nothing on its head ; and its face was withered, old as the hills, Master Elliot, and its eyes seemed to glow with a strange light, as it stood quite still and stared at us.

‘Oh, Holy Mary, protect me!’ my mother cried, crossing herself thirteen times in honour of the Blessed Virgin and the Twelve Apostles. ‘’Tis the Leprechaun that haunts our family! The Saints preserve us, what can it want?’ Still muttering prayers and crossing herself, for my mother was a dacent, honest woman, she hurried me on, and bid me, whatever happened, not to look back.

“Well, I looked straight ahead of me for a minute or so, and then, curiosity getting the upper hand of me, I peeped round, over my shoulder, and there, Holy Mary save me, was the Leprechaun following us. The moment, however, it caught my eyes it stopped, frowned, and, as sure as you are sitting there, Master Elliot, vanished, disappeared right in the twinkling of an eye into nothing. And before I could look round in front of me again, my mother caught me by the arm and cried: ‘Glory be to Heaven, what are you doing, you little devil? Looking back, when I towld ye not to, and it’s bad luck you’ll be bringing to myself and all the blessed household. Ochone, ochone, why should I be tormented with such a self-willed, senseless little crature!’ She stormed and raved at me all the way home, but that didn’t avert the bad luck, for that very night we all—my father, and mother, and brothers, and myself—heard the Leprechaun in the house, grunting, and snorting, and stamping up and down the kitchen, and in the morning we found every bit of crockery we possessed broken, and two out of three of our pigs terribly sick with the fever. And all, Master Elliot, because I looked round at the Lepre-

chaun." She then proceeded to explain to me that two leprechauns seen together usually brought good fortune, unless the seer happened to be cross-eyed, or possessed some equally distressing physical defect, in which case extreme misfortune might be expected.

"I saw two together one morning, Master Elliot," she said, "just beside a stile leading into a lane that joins the high road between Hospital and Ballynanty. I was going to market with eggs and butter, and had my basket on my arm. It was a very bright, warm morning, and the leprechauns were standing right up against the stile I had to get over, with the sunlight pouring on them."

"Were they like the one you and your mother saw?" I asked.

"Just like," the cook responded; "all in red, with queer, white faces and bare heads, and when they saw me stand still, almost scared out of my senses, they slipped to one side, and then seemed to sink right into the earth and disappear.

"Well, glory be to God, I scrambled over the stile in safety, for in my hurry 'twas a wonder the eggs were not broken, and ran till I was out of breath. But I needn't have been so upset, for, when I told Father Murphy about it—I met him just by the turning to the O'Donovans' house—he laughed and said:

"If it was two leprechauns you saw together, Ellen, there's no need to worry, for 'tis good that they'll be bringing you.'

"And shure he was right, for I got a better price for my eggs and butter that day in the market than I ever got either before or since."

In reply to my request to hear more, she told me that she often used to hear about pookahs, but that she had only seen what she believed was a pookah once. (For the sake of convenience I append her account of it in my own language.)

"It was one evening at dusk," she began, "when I was walking along a country road in the south of Ireland. There seemed to me to be an unusual stillness in the air that evening, and I was feeling a bit weird, when, just as I was nearing the foot of a decline that led into a thickly wooded hollow, something white, that looked to me like a queer animal of sorts, a kind of cross between a calf and a very shaggy white dog, moved slowly across the roadway and vanished immediately in front of a white wooden gate. It seemed to sink right down into the earth and to be swallowed up by it. A few minutes afterwards I saw the same thing again. It suddenly appeared, walking along in the same direction as I was myself, in the middle of the road, a few yards ahead of me, and, just as suddenly, it again vanished, appearing, as before, to sink right into the soil and, in some manner, to amalgamate with it.

"I was afterwards told by a farmer in the locality that the road I had been walking along, as well as the surrounding neighbourhood, was well known to be haunted by just such a phantom as the one I had described, and that it was popularly believed to be a pookah or mischievous type of spirit that had the power to appear in a variety of forms, and play havoc with people and their possessions. He said that whenever it appeared upon his farm, he knew

some misfortune would immediately befall one of his animals, and it always did. I asked him if it were not possible to lay it, and he said: "No; no one was ever known to lay a pookah, leprechaun or banshee."

With this authoritative statement our old Irish cook resumed her kitchen duties, and I, wishing her good-night, retired to bed.

To return to the ordinary fairy. A connection of mine—*i.e.* the brother of a certain aunt by marriage, to whom, by the way, I am indebted for the following narrative—once had a remarkable adventure with fairies in County Limerick.

In brief it was this. He was driving home one night in his side-car, along the road from Hospital to Ballynanty, which has always been considered one of the worst haunted roads in Ireland. The moon was high overhead, the sky unclouded, and all going well, till Mr B., my aunt's brother, was roused out of a reverie by feeling himself suddenly clutched hold of by his man-servant, who was sitting back to back with him.

"What the devil's——" he cried, but could get no further, being literally too amazed for words. The horse had come to a dead halt, and was standing still shivering, whilst the roadside was crowded with a number of tiny shadowy figures that were surging round the car, trying to drag the unfortunate driver, who was quite frantic with terror, from his seat. Mr B., however, concluding that what he saw could only be the fairies he had heard so much about, but of whose existence he had hitherto been extremely sceptical, seized the reins and urged the horse forward.

Meanwhile his servant seemed to be still paralysed with fright, and it was not until they had gone some little way, and were well out of sight of the spot where the car had halted, that the man found himself once again in possession of his tongue and normal faculties.

He then thanked God and all the saints for his deliverance, and gave a very graphic account of his experience. He said he was driving along quite all right, till the horse suddenly stopped, and when he looked down to see what was the cause of it, he perceived a crowd of fairies, who rushed at him and catching hold of him by the legs tried to drag him off the car. He said their touch was so cold that it benumbed him, and had he not prayed, as he had never prayed before, to his patron saint to aid him, he was quite sure he would never have had the strength to hold on as he did. My aunt's brother asked him why the fairies had acted in such a manner and what he thought they would have done to him had they succeeded in pulling him off the car, and he said :

"It was all because we came on them, sorr, when they were dancing. They won't be disturbed, when they are at their revels and enjoying themselves. Had they got me down into the road"—here he crossed himself again with great vehemence—"maybe I should have lost my sight, or my hearing, or the use of my limbs, and, in any case, my sowl ! A suf on them !"

The ordinary Irish fairy is not as a rule malignant, though one hears, at times, of exceptions.

Away back in the sixties of the last century, an old woman was charged, at the Assizes, with murdering her little half-witted grandson, and pleaded not guilty,

declaring that she had only acted at the instigation of the fairies. According to her story, she was out in the woods, gathering sticks, one day, when a troop of fairies came up to her and asked if there was anything she particularly wanted.

“Faith, there is,” she replied. “I want my grandchild to get well and be like other children.”

“Then you must obey our instructions,” the fairies said, and proceeded to tell her to take the little boy down to a certain stream and dip his head under the water, holding it there while she repeated a particular incantation. She must continue this treatment daily for a week, they said, at the end of which time a marked improvement would be seen in the boy, and he would eventually become quite normal. Well, the old woman said she obeyed the instructions given her, and it was only by a stroke of bad luck that she happened, one day, to hold the boy’s head under the water a little too long.

“He was very troublesome,” she explained, “and would struggle a lot on his way to the stream, so, to punish him, your honours, I held him in it a trifle longer than I ought to have done. Otherwise, he would be here beside me well and strong, your honours, with nothing whatever the matter with him.” The old woman spoke with apparent candour, and as she had told this story about the fairies to quite a number of people, and the stream had long borne the reputation of being haunted, she was acquitted, the judge remarking that it was quite clear she had no intention of killing her grandson.

Now the sceptic will probably say the old woman

was lying, and that her story was a mere fake. I do not think so. Other people in the locality were stated at the time to have encountered fairies in the same wood, and in the same spot; and with regard to her experience, I believe the old woman was telling the truth. She did encounter the fairies, and they did give her those instructions with regard to the boy, but whether or not they knew what would be the consequences is another matter. They are generally credited with the power of seeing into the future, as far as it affects human beings, but not so far as it affects their own species.

With regard to their own destiny they seem to be in profound ignorance, a point which is illustrated by a rather pathetic story that I once heard.

It was in my childhood days, when I was visiting an old woman who lived on the Wicklow Hills. I asked her if she had ever had any experience with ghosts or fairies, and she said :

“ With ghosts, yes—lots; but I have seen only one fairy. ’Twas close to this very house, in between the lights one October evening. I was standing at the door looking for Arthur, my youngest born—he had taken a letter to the post, and had been so long gone that I was getting anxious about him—when I saw Father Daniel O’Healy coming towards me. He smiled, as he caught my eye, and seemed about to say something, when he suddenly stopped and glanced around sharply, and shure it wasn’t long before I saw what made him do that, for coming up behind him from the direction of some bushes was a slip of a girl, no bigger than a child of six or seven.

“She was very fair, with long, loose flowing hair, that shone on her head and about her neck and shoulders like burnished gold, and in the waning daylight her face looked white as any lily. She came right up to Father O’Healy and, as sure as I am living, I heard her say something to him, but could not catch what it was. To my surprise, however, instead of greeting the girl nicely, for he was very fond of the ladies, was Father O’Healy, he raised his hand, as if about to strike her, and called out something in a voice totally unlike his own, it was so harsh and angry; whilst the poor girl, looking at him in dismay, uttered a loud cry, just as if her heart was broken, poor soul, and retreated towards the clump of bushes she had come from. I then perceived a something shadowy and queer about her that I hadn’t noticed before, and I had just begun to realise she was a spirit of some kind, when she vanished. She seemed suddenly to melt right away into air, and where she had stood but an instant before, I saw only the dark shadow of the bush. It was all so swift and unexpected, that I was much startled, and was about to step back into the cottage and shut the door, when Father O’Healy called out and bid me let him in.

“‘Did you see her?’ says he, as soon as he was seated by the fireside. ‘She was a fairy, the first I’ve ever seen away from Cork and Limerick.’

“‘A fairy, Father!’ says I. ‘I thought she was a ghost.’

“‘No,’ says he; ‘’tis no ghost she was. Ghosts don’t come up to one and talk like that; besides, she had the fairy look in her eyes and mouth.’

“ ‘She was wonderfully pretty, Father,’ says I.

“ ‘She was,’ says he, crossing himself; ‘and what do you think she said to me? “Is there any hope, Father,” says she, “of eternal life for fairies?” And what should I say but No. “No,” says I, speaking quick and angry-like to hide my fear, “none; none whatsoever. The promise of Salvation refers to the Human Race only. Go!” I crossed myself three times in rapid succession, and then with a loud cry—you must have heard it—she left me. But she was pretty, very,’ and Father O’Healy sighed deeper than I ever heard him sigh before.”

“I thought all fairies were very small, Mrs Carey,” I remarked, on my informant concluding her story.

“It is according to the county and part of Ireland they are found in,” she replied. “In Cork and Limerick they are usually tiny, so I’ve always been told, but up in the north and about here they are often not so very small.”

“And their clothes: do they wear any particular colour?”

“No,” Mrs Carey said; “the one I saw was all in white, but I’ve heard of others wearing green, and red, and black gowns and kilts. However, they are very seldom seen in this country nowadays, and I believe ’tis because the towns have grown so, and are changed. ’Tis the smoke and the din of Dublin that have driven them from here; unless ’tis the English, for shure, and you must know it, they cannot stand the English at all.”

## CHAPTER V

### ON CLOCKS

**O**N a landing in a house I used to stay in when a boy was an old grandfather clock, and every time I passed it I got the impression there was something inside it watching me. I felt—indeed it seemed to me a certainty—that, with queer eyes, it followed and criticised my every movement, all the while I was in sight of it. And at night I often fancied I heard soft footsteps come from it to the door of my room and, after waiting there for a time, cross the landing and stealthily ascend or descend the stairs, making them creak mysteriously. When one of our old and most esteemed servants was seriously ill in the house, I used to lie awake and listen to the clock ticking. Sometimes the ticking would cease and in its place I would hear sighs and groans; and a voice, strangely like that of our old servant, would mutter and whisper, “Oh, dear me! oh, dear me!” This would continue hour after hour, with brief intermissions, until the dawn had chased the last of the dark fantastic shadows of the night away. Not only I, but my sister, also, heard the voice in the clock the night our poor old servant died; but directly after her death it ceased, and the ticking once again became normal.

As may be gathered from the foregoing incident,

I believe that clocks, especially grandfather clocks, that are really old, are very uncanny things. Time seems to endow them with a degree of individuality which no other piece of household furniture possesses, and in some cases so intensely human does this individuality become, that one cannot help wondering whether, after all, it is not a fact that all that ticking and striking ceases, after a time, to be purely mechanical, and that there really does exist, at the back of it all, something much more subtle and complex than a man-made mechanism—a something, in fact, that enables the clock, occasionally, not only to live and breathe, but to think, and think very acutely too.

I had a very extraordinary experience with a genuinely old grandfather clock when I was a youth, still in my teens, in Dublin. I went one afternoon to call on a friend of mine, a man named Melville, who had rooms in the neighbourhood of Lower Leeson Street. On arriving at his house, I was told by the landlady he was out; but, as I was in no hurry, I said I would wait, and was immediately shown into his sitting-room. My own landlady's fox-terrier, Mack, was with me, and, as I was crossing the floor to a seat, he made a sudden rush, and then began to bark. Thinking he had espied a cat I turned round to scold him; and was greatly surprised to see no sign of any cat, but only Mack, with his hair bristling all over him, standing before a highly polished ebony grandfather clock. The moment I glanced at it, I, too, received a shock. I felt that in some strange indefinable way it was unlike any other clock I had ever seen. Viewed in its

remote corner, in the waning daylight, for the shadows of the evening were already beginning to lie thick around it, it looked startlingly black, and grim, and monstrous, and there was a weirdness about it which I felt was not confined solely to its exterior, but was due to something lurking within it, a something that was silently quizzing and analysing me, as I stood there, listening in almost breathless anticipation to its slow and measured tick, tick, tick. I was still standing there, too fascinated to stir, when my friend suddenly burst in upon me, with his usual hearty welcome, and regret at having been out when I arrived. Tea was then brought in, and all the while we were having it, although my friend talked incessantly, I could still feel the presence of the clock, and still hear its slow and solemn ticking. Suddenly, however, I realised that it had stopped, and remarked on it to my friend.

“It shouldn’t have stopped,” he said; “I wound it up only this morning. Perhaps Westcliff’s coming.”

“Westcliff!” I said. “What has Westcliff to do with your clock stopping?”

“Everything,” my friend replied. “That clock—as I think you have already discovered, for I caught you studying it very closely as I came in—is no ordinary clock; it’s haunted, and haunted in a very unusual way. Between it and Westcliff is some strange affinity, some peculiar bond, because it invariably stops, just as it has done now, when he is on his way here. I’ll bet you a tanner, if we go to the door and look out, we shall see him coming.”

We went to the door and looked out, but everything

was still, still as the grave, and there was no one in sight. The road, in fact, both ways, was absolutely deserted, and nothing moved in it, saving the shadows of the trees—dark and ominous-looking shadows that waved restlessly to and fro on the pavement. Then my heart gave a big jump, for, with an almost startling suddenness, round the farthest corner of the road swung the figure of a youth in a light overcoat and bowler hat.

“Westcliff, as I’m a sinner!” my friend ejaculated. “There, didn’t I tell you so! You’ve lost that tanner.”

Well, exactly a year later, I was having tea with Melville again in the same room and at the same hour, and what it was that made me I don’t know, but I suddenly thought of the above incident.

“By the by, Melville,” I said, “have you seen Westcliff lately?”

“Westcliff?” Melville ejaculated inquiringly, his mouth full of macaroon.

“Yes,” I nodded. “Westcliff, the fellow that clock of yours seemed to know all about. He came, if you remember, when I was here, just a year ago. By the way, it would be rather a coincidence if the clock stopped again, and, as before, Westcliff turned up a few minutes later; but I don’t suppose that will happen.”

Even as I spoke, however, the ticking stopped, and there was a sepulchral silence. For a moment neither of us spoke, and then Melville, in rather an awestruck voice, exclaimed: “Well, I’m d——d! If that doesn’t take the biscuit!”

"He's coming," I said.

"Without a doubt," Melville replied. "I've been wondering what's happened to him, for I haven't seen him since he left the hospital some months ago. I didn't know him very well. To tell the truth, he was always rather a mystery to me; there was something deuced queer about him, something I couldn't altogether understand, and which always rather jarred on me. Hulloo! What's that? My God, the clock! Listen." He stopped speaking, and we both heard a curious sound coming from it, a sort of birring and whirring; and a few seconds later several kind of convulsive throbs, as if the clock were in real physical or mental pain. After that there was a slight—a very slight—pause, and whilst Mack, who was under the table, nestled nearer to me, and we listened spell-bound, the clock very slowly and solemnly began to strike. Neither of us spoke till the last echo of its final note had died away, and then Melville said: "Eight! Is that what you counted?"

"Yes," I said. "What does it mean?"

"God alone knows," Melville replied; "unless it is that Westcliff won't be here for another eight minutes."

We both of us got up, and, with Mack very close at our heels, went to the front door and looked out. No one was in sight. We stood there watching, while the twilight deepened, and the gloom from the tall, silent trees in the gardens seemed to intensify, and while, one after the other, upon pavement and road, the shadows of the evening made their debut. We stood, I say, for some time, watching, and still no sign of anybody in the least degree like Westcliff.

“It’s no use standing here any longer,” Melville said at length; “the clock has deceived us this time, unless we misinterpreted the striking. It may have meant he’ll come at eight, and it isn’t six yet. Anyhow, let’s to our pipes again.”

We then re-entered the house, and soon afterwards I took my departure.

The following day, about three o’clock, Melville came round to my digs in a great state of excitement.

“Pretty awful about Westcliff, isn’t it?” he began.

“Awful about Westcliff!” I ejaculated. “Why, what’s happened?”

“You haven’t heard, then,” Melville responded, speaking slowly and looking very white. “When I went to the hospital this morning I was told there had been a tragedy—Westcliff had shot himself in his digs last night. Of course I asked if anyone knew about what time it had happened, and Tom Barnard, who heard me ask, and who knew him intimately, said: ‘Yes; he did it exactly on the stroke of eight.’ It’s strange about the clock, isn’t it?”

Another queer happening associated with a clock takes me back to my nursery days, when we used to employ a Miss Milward, as a kind of sewing-maid. She was one of three sisters, who were Midlanders and of the well-to-do yeoman middle class, but obliged to earn their daily bread as best they could, owing to their father having speculated with his money and lost it all. Our Miss Milward, as we used to call her, was the youngest of the trio, and though I was very fond of her, I must say she was not too conscientious. She was very clever with her needle, but she used it

little and talked much. I remember on one occasion, when she was sitting with me in the nursery, the clock on the mantelshelf struck six, instead of striking, as it should have, three.

“Why has it done that?” I asked.

“Maybe it’s because I am here,” Miss Milward replied, looking rather glum. “Clocks seem to have some strange interest in our family. There was a grandfather clock in the hall of our old home near Worcester, and it used to strike quite all right till there was a death in the family.”

“And then?” I queried.

“It struck all wrong,” Miss Milward remarked; “just like that clock over there. I recollect one evening, when we were all seated round the supper-table, hearing it suddenly strike two. ‘I don’t like that,’ my mother exclaimed, and she looked first at my father and then at all of us in turn. ‘I don’t like it at all. It has been striking quite all right till now.’”

“Well, the following day we got a letter from Birmingham to say that one of my aunts, my father’s favourite sister, had died at two o’clock in the morning.”

“Anything else?” I said, looking somewhat nervously at the mantelshelf.

“Why, yes,” Miss Milward observed in very solemn tones. “One morning, when we were having breakfast—we had our meals in the large stone-paved hall—my father suddenly remarked, ‘Dang that clock! I feel all the while I am sitting here it is looking at me. I got the sensation first thing this morning, when I passed by it, and I’m blessed if I can get rid of it.’”

“ ‘Imagination,’ my mother ejaculated. ‘You’re still dreaming.’ ”

“ ‘Oh, no, I’m not,’ my father replied. ‘I’m wide enough awake, I can tell you. I’ve got it now, the sensation that I’m being watched, closely watched every mouthful I take, by that danged clock. I’ll burn it one of these days.’ ”

“ ‘I wish you would,’ my mother said, and then suddenly left off speaking, for at that very moment the clock we were discussing struck three, such an ominous, sinister-sounding three that we all stared at one another aghast. ‘Humph!’ my father ejaculated, as soon as the final echoes of the striking had died away. ‘We shall hear of something bad before very long. That accounts for my sensations.’ ”

“My mother made no reply, but as she poured him out a second cup of coffee I noticed her hand tremble. Well,” Miss Milward continued, her voice growing even more solemn, “that very afternoon, at three o’clock, my father had a stroke, and he died shortly after midnight.”

“And the clock?” I said. “Did you get rid of it?”

“Yes,” she responded; “my mother took it into Worcester the day after the funeral and sold it.”

## CHAPTER VI

### ON BELLS AND CANDLES

**B**EFORE passing on to other subjects, I would like to add to the clock incidents, already narrated, just one other that Miss Milward told me. We were talking together one day about executions (Miss Milward loved gruesome topics), and it was *à propos* of the subject of our conversation that she told me the incident in question, an incident relating to a clock that belonged to an old woman named Molly Grady. Molly Grady, who was an old inhabitant of the village in which Miss Milward was born, had one idiosyncrasy: she would suffer almost any inconvenience, and tramp many miles to see an execution, and whenever one was about to take place, in order to make sure of getting a good view of it, she would take up her stand in front of the gallows the night before, and wait there, utterly regardless of the weather, till the morning. Molly also had one hobby (one might almost say it formed part of the idiosyncrasy)—namely, the collecting of objects that were in some way or another associated with a crime. Now, she had in her collection, besides an old red cloak belonging to a Worcester woman, who had poisoned her husband, and other objects of a similar nature, an eight-day clock, that had once stood in

an ante-room at the local jail, and it is around this clock that the interest of Miss Milward's story centres.

It always stopped, she declared, whenever an execution took place. It made no difference whether Molly had only just wound it up or not, exactly at the moment the unfortunate man or woman, condemned to death, set foot upon the scaffold, it stopped; and no matter how hard Molly tried to make it go again, it would not do so till several hours later, when suddenly it would emit an odd, birring, whirring sound, and then recommence ticking. Miss Milward stated that everyone in the village knew this to be true, and frequently spoke of "the haunted clock."

Prisons, it would seem, are sometimes haunted, but not as frequently, perhaps, as one would think they might be.

An ex-official of Newgate told me the other day of a ghostly experience he had once had in the old prison. It happened the night prior to the commencement of its demolition. "My wife and I were sitting together in our little parlour," he said, "when suddenly a bell from somewhere in the big, silent building began to ring furiously. As there was no one in the place but ourselves—of that we were sure, as we had already been round the premises and locked up for the night—we looked at one another in amazement. Then, lighting a lamp, we at once commenced a search, and, proceeding in the direction the sound came from, soon saw, to our horror, that the bell ringing was the bell outside the condemned cell, and it kept on clanging violently, as if someone inside the cell were tugging madly at the lever, till we got close

to it, when it very abruptly ceased. After that there was intense silence, a strangely intense silence, so it seemed to me; and although I had never felt in the least degree frightened in the prison before, all the years I had been there, I must say that I did feel a bit queer, when I realised in the midst of that strange hush that the bell we had heard and seen clanging could not have been rung unless hands of some kind or another had been working the lever from the inside. Yet, whose were those hands? It was a question both my wife and I inwardly asked ourselves as we stood looking about us in the shadow-laden passage, but it was a question to which neither of us, either then, or afterwards, could find any answer."

"Then the mystery was never solved?" I said.

"No!" the ex-official replied. "There was no satisfactory explanation of it on natural physical grounds, and, consequently, although neither my wife nor I had ever believed in ghosts before, after this occurrence we came to the conclusion that we had been mistaken, and that, after all, there must be something in what folks term the Supernatural."

To go back to my own experiences. When still a child, we lived for a time in a very badly haunted house in Ely Place, Dublin, and among the numerous phenomena displayed there was the ringing of bells by some invisible and unknown agency. Sometimes all the bells in the house would ring simultaneously, and keep on ringing for some minutes, apparently of their own accord, whilst at other times it would be only one bell, a bell in a certain one of the rooms,

that was more grim and gloomy, so I used to think, than all the others put together. In another house, in which I lived as a child, I once saw the bell handle on a wall move when no one was touching it, whilst clang, clang went the bell, just as if someone had rung it. There was no accounting for it, saving on the supposition either of mice or ghosts, and as the house was undoubtedly haunted by phantoms of the dead, I inclined to the latter alternative.

At night, in the same house, when we were all in bed, we used to lie awake and listen to the ceaseless tread of what sounded like men in armour ascending and descending the broad stone staircases and parading the passages. Occasionally there would be a noise like a scuffle outside my room, succeeded by a violent bang on one of the panels of my door, and then a silence, profound and overwhelming, and nothing more till the following night, when there would probably be phenomena of a different kind.

To go on with my series of bell hauntings. A visitor, to whom we narrated the foregoing, told us of a garden that was haunted by the jingling of toy bells, such as those that adorn the toy harness children use when they play at horses. She had experienced the haunting herself, she said, and would tell us all about it.

"It was one evening in the summer," she began, "and I was in the garden—my friend's garden with whom I was staying—stooping down to gather a few strawberries. The day had been unusually hot, and the evening was so still that not even a leaf stirred. Everything, in fact, seemed in the waning daylight

as if it had become transfixed. I was inwardly commenting on this intense stillness," she went on, "for it struck me as rather remarkable, when suddenly I caught the sound of jingling bells coming towards me, along the path beside which I was kneeling. Supposing it was my friend's Pekinese, and that she had bought it a collar decorated with bells, I did not trouble to look round, until the sound came close to me. I then glanced up casually, but to my astonishment saw nothing. No living thing was in sight either up or down the long vista of path; indeed no living thing was to be seen anywhere. And yet that jingle, jingle of bells was alongside me and at my very elbow. Now I am not a nervous person as a rule, but I confess that, as I knelt there all alone, amid the fast-falling shadows of the evening, that mysterious jingling, for which I could not in any way account, try how I would, did appal me, and I felt afraid, more afraid than I ever felt before, or have ever felt since. It was all so horribly weird and inexplicable. The sounds at last passed me, and, as soon as they had died away in the distance, I jumped up and ran back to the house, as fast as my legs could carry me. When I told my friend what had happened she looked, I thought, very glum, and for a long time declared that I had imagined it all. However, when I repeatedly stated that it was no imagination on my part, and that I shouldn't rest until I had solved the mystery, she at once altered her tone. 'Since you are determined not to let the matter drop,' she said, 'I might as well make a clean breast of it. The truth is that an ancestress of mine, many years ago, murdered

her stepson in the garden, and both it and the house have been haunted ever since. Playing at horses was the child's favourite amusement, and the jingling you heard was the jingling of his toy reins.' "

That was our visitor's story.

I asked her if she ever saw him, meaning the ghost of the child, and she said, " No, but I saw the cruel stepmother in the garden two nights later. I was walking along the same path, at about nine o'clock, when I saw coming towards me a slim young woman in a white muslin dress and dark cloak, with hood attached, thrown carelessly over her shoulders. As before, the night was very fine, not a cloud in the sky and not a breath of wind, and her figure stood out in strong relief against the moonlit gravel path. She was very pretty, with small and regularly formed features, large eyes with a pleading look in them, a daintily fashioned mouth, open just wide enough to show two even rows of the whitest teeth, and a mass of fair hair, that hung in loose curls around her slender neck and shoulders. She was just like the pictures one sometimes sees of princesses in fairy tales ; I had never seen anyone half as pretty in real life. As she drew nearer, I noticed that her hands were very slim and white, and that she was wearing very costly rings and bracelets. She passed me by in silence, without even glancing at me, and immediately afterwards, when I turned round to have a good look at her, she was gone. And there was no cover ; a line of low-growing shrubs, with their shadows looking black in the moonlight, bordered the garden in the distance, and all round me, a

wide, open expanse of grass plots and flower-beds, nothing more."

This concluded our visitor's story. She added, however, that by an almost superhuman effort she forbore from mentioning this second experience to her friend, making as an excuse for her sudden leave-taking the news she had received that morning of a somewhat unusual happening at home.

Phantom bells have frequently been heard at sea, and along the sea-coast in many parts of Scotland and Ireland, and in Cornwall, Devon, Wales, and the North of England. When I was spending a holiday in Cornwall, years ago, I met an old man, who told me he had not only seen fairies on the sands of Lelant, but had listened to church bells ringing out at sea in St Ives Bay. According to him, long centuries ago the sea suddenly swallowed up what was then the parish church of Lelant, and ever since that day, granted certain atmospherical and hydrospherical conditions, the bells of that sacred edifice can still be heard summoning a ghostly congregation to a ghostly service. Apparently he had had many psychic experiences. "I was crossing the Towans, one night," he said, "with Jerry, my dog, and had got almost within sight of the ferry to Hale, when he suddenly commenced acting in a very strange manner. Squatting on his haunches he threw back his head and emitted a series of howls, and then moaned, as if in very great distress. Much surprised, for I had never known him do this before, I stopped, and patted and talked to him, but all to no purpose; he still continued howling and moaning. Then, while I was still

trying to pacify him, I heard the far-off sound of bells, and it appeared to come from the direction of the sea. As it was between twelve and one o'clock A.M. I knew, of course, there was no service, and I was beginning to feel uncommonly creepy, when my dog suddenly stopped howling and began to bark furiously. I then saw coming towards me, from the direction of the church, three figures, all clad in white from head to foot, walking behind one another in Indian file.

“At first I thought it must be some strange kind of optical illusion, and, accordingly, I shut my eyes and rubbed the lids, but, on opening them again, the figures were still there, and I perceived with a thrill of horror that their faces were bound round after the manner of the dead, and that what I had at first taken to be white cloaks and hoods were nothing more nor less than winding-sheets. I sprang to one side in terror, and the figures stalked past me, making direct for the beach. On gaining the shore they crossed the sands to the sea, to where the sound of the bells seemed to come from, and disappeared, one after the other, in the moonlit water. At that time—I am speaking now of nearly sixty years ago—I often used to chat with the gravedigger at Lelant, and when I told him of my experience, he said at once :

“ ‘Them bells were the bells of old Lelant church a-ringing under the water, and the figures you saw, the ghosts of them as ’ave been buried here a-going to the ghostly service. I’ve often seen ’em myself, twenty or thirty of ’em, all dressed in windin’-sheets.’ ”

Another church in Cornwall about which I heard

many strange tales, as a boy, is at Forrabury, or, as it is sometimes called, Bottreaux. According to tradition, a new peal of bells for this church was once being conveyed by ship to Forrabury, and all went well till they got within sight of their destination. The captain of the barque, then, for some unknown reason, and for no apparent cause, suddenly took it into his head to use the most profane language, whereupon a violent storm came on, and the ship sank with its cargo and all hands. Now, ever since then, the lost bells have been heard, periodically, to ring beneath the waves, and, on certain nights in the year, phantom boats containing phantom crews have been observed to row out to the spot where the unfortunate barque sank. I am aware that most people will scoff at all this, but there are quite sober and serious-minded fisherfolk still living near the scene of the tradition, who have told me they have not only heard the ghost bells, but that they have seen the ghost boats with their spirit crews, too.

Also, ghostly church-bell ringings are not confined to the sea. There is a valley at Fisherty Brow, near Lonsdale, where, on All-Hallows' E'en and certain other nights in the year, if you lie down and apply your ear to the soil, you may distinctly hear the pealing of church bells.

Centuries ago, so tradition says, a church stood there, but, owing to the wickedness of the congregation, it was one day swallowed up in a quite local landslide or earthquake, and ever since the spot has been periodically haunted.

A similar story is told of Gormire, a small lake

romantically situated on the slope of the Hambleton Hills, and of Lake Semerwater.

I once met a man in Liverpool who assured me that he had had a very strange experience on Semerwater. He was rowing on the lake, late one night, with a friend of his, who was then living at Aysgarth, and just when they were about in the middle of the lake, which was quite deserted, saving for themselves, they suddenly heard what seemed to them like the sound of a peal of muffled bells, coming from the depths of the water, while, at the same time, they saw on either side of the boat, and close to it, a number of very beautiful spherical lights of varied colours—blue and red and green—floating about in mid-air. The phenomena, both auditory and visual, lasted for several minutes, succeeded by the most intense and solemn hush. They visited the lake several succeeding nights at the same hour, but neither heard nor saw anything. Consequently, they came to the conclusion that the haunting—for haunting they firmly believed it to be—was confined to the anniversary of some event, and that event they thought was, probably, at the root of the local tradition.

When I was a boy, I often heard strange tales about the great bell of St Paul's and Big Ben, but it was not until I was grown up that I came across the following extract in *Notes and Queries*: "On the morning of Thursday, the 14th of March 1861, the inhabitants of London were roused by repeated strokes of the new great bell of Westminster, and most persons supposed it was for a death in the Royal Family. It proved, however, to be due to some de-

rangement of the clock, for at four and five o'clock, ten or twelve strokes were struck instead of the proper number. On mentioning this," the correspondent goes on to state, "in the morning to a friend, who is versed in London antiquities, he observed that there is an opinion in the city that anything the matter with St Paul's great bell is an omen of ill to the Royal Family"; and he added: "I hope the opinion will not extend to the Westminster Bell." "This," adds the same writer, "was at eleven on Friday morning. I see this morning that it was not till one A.M. the lamented Duchess of Kent was considered in the least danger, and, as we are aware, she expired in less than twenty-four hours."

Just one more reference to bell phenomena, before I pass on.

When I was staying in the house, I have already alluded to, in Ely Place, Dublin, the old cook said to me one morning:

"There will be a death connected with someone in this blessed house before very long, ochone."

"Why?" I asked.

"Why?" she answered. "Glory be to God, because all the bells in the house started ringing at three o'clock in the night!"

"I didn't hear them," I said.

"No," she replied, "because you were on the third floor; but I sleep in the basement, and they were all ringing away in the passage, just outside my door, as if the devil himself were in them. Muira Musha, there'll be a death sure enough." And she was right, for she herself received a telegram in the afternoon to say

that her sister, her only sister, had met with a fatal accident in Limerick. In Ireland, when all the bells in a house ring together of their own accord, it is regarded as a sure sign of some impending misfortune. In England the same phenomenon seems to be merely an idiosyncrasy in haunting—nothing else.

The late Claude Askew, the novelist, who was very interested in my work, once asked me to investigate a house he was staying in, where mysterious bell-ringing seemed to be quite a common occurrence. He told me he and his friends would often go into the basement, where the bells were, and watch them ring furiously.

Workmen were called in, but no satisfactory explanation of the disturbance, saving on the basis of the Supernatural, was forthcoming.

A parallel case, happening in Sydenham, was reported to me not very long ago.

The bells in a house there suddenly took to ringing when no visible agency was at work, and, on the assumption that mice would account for it, poison of all sorts was placed alongside the wires. It made no difference, however; the unaccountable ringing still went on, periodically, just as badly as ever. At last, one evening, when all the bells in the house were ringing in concert, the owner of the house took a pair of pliers and, mounting on a chair, cut all the wires.

"There," he said to himself, "that will fix you." But it did not, for, to his utter astonishment, the ringing continued.

## CHAPTER VII

### CORPSE CANDLES AND OTHER HAUNTINGS

**I** MUST now go back to the time my mother died. The evening before her death, my youngest sister saw a head, similar in every detail to the head my elder sister had seen prior to my father's death, peering down at her from the balustrade on the top landing of the house we were then living in. But on this occasion there was no screaming or wailing. A few days later my old nurse, on going upstairs to fetch something, received a shock. In the waning daylight she saw a white face looking down at her from over the banisters of the landing on the first floor, and recognised it at once as that of my mother, whose funeral had only just taken place.

The face withdrew almost at once, and a moment later a door opened and slammed to again. For some seconds my old nurse was too shocked to proceed, but at last, pulling herself together with an effort, she continued her ascent of the staircase and arrived on the landing. There was no one there, and when she somewhat timidly opened each door in turn and peered inside, every room was empty. She never saw what was believed to be my mother's ghost again, although other people, who were either living or staying in the house, subsequently, both saw and heard it. I would like to call attention to this haunting in

particular, because it disposes of the popular belief that it is only the spirits of the wicked earthbound that return.

Love, the deepest and strongest love, I am sure, brings people back at times, just as certainly as hate; and that my mother loved us to a degree that would enable her to return seems to me, from what I can recollect of her, to have been perfectly obvious. I was told by those who actually experienced the happenings that on the several nights preceding the funeral the door of the room in which my mother's body lay, and which, by the way, was kept locked, was heard to open, whilst someone apparently came out, crossed the landing, and paused outside each bedroom in turn, just as my mother used to do, in her lifetime, when she wished us all a final good-night. The footsteps were then heard to retreat, and her bedroom door to shut with a bang, after which everything was still. All this occurred when I was eight years of age. A few months later I made the acquaintance of what in those days was rather scornfully termed a dame school.

Being a boarder, I was to some extent brought in contact with the servants, and on seeing one of them, one day, seemingly very much upset, I asked her what was the matter.

"The matter! Why, everything's the matter," she replied. "Last night, sonny" (she called all the boys "sonny") "there was a winding-sheet in the candle, and it pointed towards me."

"What do you mean by a winding-sheet?" I inquired.

“What a little silly you are!” she ejaculated; “a winding-sheet in the candle is the wax that circles round about and looks like a winding-sheet. It was while we were at supper, and Polly called my attention to it. ‘Martha,’ says she, ‘look, there’s a winding-sheet in the candle, and it’s pointing to you. You’ll hear of a death before very long.’ And that ain’t the worst,” Martha added, “for I dreamed in the night that one of my teeth fell out, and when I picked it up I saw the face of my brother Tom engraven on it.”

“Do you think that something will happen to Tom, then?” I asked.

“I am afeared so, sonny, and I can’t rest for thinking on it.”

I expressed my sympathy with her, and, later on in the afternoon, was no little impressed to hear that she had just received a telegram announcing Tom’s death. He had died quite suddenly of apoplexy.

Candles and candlesticks, like clocks and bells, often seem to be utilised by the Unknown as a medium for denoting its presence. Only a short time ago I was asked by a lady to investigate a case of haunting in her house in Portsea Place, Hyde Park. The lady complained of hearing footsteps, presumably a man’s, ascending and descending the staircase in the dead of night—she and her maid were the only occupants of the house—and also of the behaviour of the candles in two tall candlesticks in the drawing-room. Whenever a certain visitor entered the drawing-room, the candles, in some mysterious fashion, would come out of the candlesticks and fall on to the floor. I asked the lady, who was a war widow, if she were contemplating

marrying again, and she said she was, but that she couldn't altogether make up her mind, as, apart from the fact that she was not quite sure of her suitor, there was another reason for her indecision. Then, while she was still speaking, it occurred to me that this contemplated marriage was the cause of the haunting, and I asked her outright if the visitor, upon whose advent the candles behaved so mysteriously, was the man she was thinking of marrying.

"It is," she said.

"What about your late husband?" I ventured. "Did he approve of second marriages?"

"No," she replied, her face becoming troubled, "he didn't. In fact, he couldn't bear the idea of my ever marrying again, and that is the other reason I hinted at that is making me hesitate now. Do you think the footsteps and the behaviour of the candles has anything to do with him?"

"Did the idea that it had never occur to you?" I said.

"Why, yes," she murmured, her face flushing. "I have thought so several times. The footsteps are not unlike his."

"Then," I said, "you need look no further for an explanation. The disturbances are due to your late husband."

The lady was silent for a few minutes; then she said: "What would you advise me to do? Break it off with Mr ——?"

"I am afraid that question is outside my province," I replied. "I can only suggest that you obey your own instincts."

Whether she did break off the engagement, or not, I do not know, for I had to leave town just then on a very urgent matter, and when I returned she had left Portsea Place. I never saw or heard of her again.

In Wales, where I spent several holidays, while I was still at a dame school and during my first year or two at Clifton College, I came across many superstitions about candles. I well recollect the landlady of our apartments in Aberystwyth telling me about the Canhywllah Cyrth, or corpse candles. She said that late one night, when she and her parents were returning to their home at Lanylar, they saw a blue light, like a candle flame, suddenly appear in the road in front of them, and move steadily forward in the direction they were going. It was a Canhywllah Cyrth, and it kept advancing straight ahead of them, till it got to a white wooden gate, leading to the house of a farmer named Morgan. There it turned aside, and they saw it pass over the gate, and go right up the gravel path, and mount slowly on to the roof of the house, where it remained flickering and flaring alternately for some minutes, before it very abruptly disappeared. The next day they heard that Mrs Morgan was dead. She had been taken seriously ill in the night, as nearly as they could say at the very time they had seen the light mount on to the roof of the house. Our landlady was also able to corroborate the statement I had frequently heard that the River Istwyth was haunted by a Canhywllah Cyrth that used to deliberately try to drown people. She told me that a Mr David Lloyd, whom she knew as a girl, entirely owed his death to it. He and a friend of his,

named Bright, a man she had often seen with him, were walking along the banks of the Istwyth one very dark night, searching for the proper ford, when they suddenly saw a red light in the shape of a huge candle flame a little way ahead of them.

“Hurrah!” David Lloyd cried, pointing to the flame, “there’s someone with a torch. Now we are all right.”

“Don’t be so sure,” Mr Bright said dubiously. “It doesn’t look to me like a torch. I don’t like the appearance of it at all. I believe it is a Canhywllah Cyrth!”

“Rot!” David Lloyd laughed. “I never knew you were so superstitious before. It’s just an ordinary torch, and I’m going to follow it.”

It was in vain Mr Bright tried to dissuade him. He shot on ahead of him, after the light, which, pursuing its way along the bank for some little distance, suddenly turned off at right angles, and David Lloyd, still following it, stepped right into the river and was drowned.

My own experience of a corpse candle occurred during this same visit to Aberystwyth, and while we were staying in the same house. I was out for a walk, along a lonely country road, with my old nurse and a friend of our landlady’s. We were returning home in the dusk, when our landlady’s friend, who was telling us about a brother of hers in Canada, suddenly stopped short and stood gazing in the direction of a clump of trees.

“For the Lord’s sake, look over yonder!” she exclaimed; “that’s a corpse candle!”

We both looked, and saw a pale blue light, not unlike a very large candle flame, hovering in mid-air, about five and a half feet from the ground.

"Isn't it a will-o'-the-wisp?" I inquired.

"No," our landlady's friend replied, "it's no will-o'-the-wisp; it's what we call in Wales a corpse candle. If we watch long enough, we shall see it move."

She then went on to explain to us that corpse candles were invariably a portent of death, and that their size corresponded to some extent with the age of the person about to die.

"If it's a baby," she said, "the light is very small; if a child in its teens, it is larger; and if a grown-up person, it is very large, like that one."

As she spoke an eerie silence fell on us, and the shadows from the trees seemed to grow darker and to assume stranger and more fantastic shapes. Then the light we were watching slowly moved. It left the trees and made in a direct line for a white cottage that stood out in strong relief against the dark, lowering sky in the background. When it was within a few yards of the cottage, a night-bird uttered a hideous hybrid sound, a cross between a scream and a wail, and immediately afterwards a dog howled. Then stillness again, while we watched the light go right up to the cottage, rise to a level with the roof, hover about the chimneys for some minutes, and then abruptly disappear. Up to that moment we had all three stood as if spellbound. Our landlady's friend now broke the silence.

"I don't know who lives in that cottage," she said,

“but depend upon it there’ll be a death there before another day is out.”

She proved a true prophet, for the next night she came to us in a rare state of excitement, and said :

“There, didn’t I tell you that was a corpse candle ! I have just been told that a stone-mason named Evans lives in that cottage, and that his wife died there this afternoon about four o’clock.”

Yet another candle haunting, but of a somewhat different kind. It occurred in Aberystwyth, some few years before we went there, in a house I frequently visited, not a stone’s-throw from the sea-front. The lady who experienced the haunting in this house gave the following account of it : “I came here to stay with an aged aunt of mine one Christmas, and I slept in a bed by her side. I am a good sleeper, and, as a rule, sleep like a top, from the moment I lay my head on the pillow, till the maid brings in the early cup of tea in the morning ; but on the night before my visit terminated, soon after I had gone to sleep, I awoke with a start, and directly afterwards heard the clock on the landing outside strike one. Then, to my utter surprise, I saw there was a light in the room, and, on sitting up, I perceived that one of the wax candles on the chimney-piece was alight, but that, instead of the flame being a yellowish white, as it usually was, it was a curious kind of leadenish blue. Thinking my aunt must have left the candle burning by mistake, I got up and, going to the fireplace, blew it out. Then I went back to bed. But I hadn’t been lying down for more than a minute, before I looked round, and saw the same

candle alight again. Much mystified, because I felt sure I had extinguished it, I got up and once more blew it out, this time with an extra big puff to make quite certain it was out. However, I hadn't been back in bed a minute, before the same thing happened. The candle was again alight and burning with the same blue flame. Then I got scared, and covering my head with the bedclothes remained like that till the morning. My aunt being very severe, and not at all the kind of person that invited childish confidences, I didn't tell her my experience, but, instead, unburdened myself to Susan, the maid, who had been with her for many years and was looked upon as one of the family. I shall never forget this old woman's expression as she listened to me. Instead of laughing, as I fully expected she would, she went white as a sheet, and began to cry.

“‘Oh, dear me! dear me!’ she groaned, ‘as sure as I’m alive that means the missus is a-going to die.’

“‘Why?’ I asked, much alarmed.

“‘Why, Missie,’ Susan replied, in between her sobs, ‘whenever hennyone sees a candle doing that, it means someone in the ’ouse is a-going to die. I saw a candle be’ave like that before your poor Aunt Sarah died; it was the very night before—and in this very ’ouse too; and your aunt hupstairs told me as she ’ad seen the same thing ’appen the very day her mother died. “Susan,” says she, “it’s a family ’aunting”; and I knows it is, and it can’t mean anyone now but my dear missus.’

“I consoled her as best I could, telling her that no one believed in such superstitions nowadays. But she was right, for I had hardly settled down at home, before I heard that my aunt had had a stroke in the night and had died the following morning.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### ON SYMPATHY, AND EARLY EXPERIENCES OF PROJECTION

**I**T was during my schooldays at Clifton College that I heard of a ghostly incident, an account of which has already been in print, in connection with the then headmaster, the Reverend J. M. Wilson, who is now Canon of Worcester. Naturally the story was much talked of in the school, and if I remember rightly it was to this effect. One evening, while Canon Wilson was still a student at Cambridge, and apparently in the very pink of health, he suddenly felt desperately ill, and was seized with the conviction he was going to die. It did not seem to him to be actually a physical illness, not, for example, a chill, as it did not appear to carry with it any symptoms, and he did not suffer any pain. He was merely conscious of a feeling of acute discomfort and a sensation that he was dying. He couldn't settle down to work, he couldn't give his mind to a game of backgammon; he could do nothing in fact but think about death and another world. In three hours' time, however, he suddenly began to feel better, and retiring to rest early, he fell into a sound sleep, from which he awoke perfectly well in the morning. That afternoon he received a letter saying that

his brother was dead; and it transpired that his death had taken place the previous evening at the time he, himself, was feeling so extraordinarily ill. Now although his brother had been in consumption for some time, Canon Wilson had heard nothing that led him to suppose there was any immediate danger; hence the letter came as a very great shock, and he could but conclude that his own peculiar experience was in some way connected with his brother's death. It is, of course, many years since I was at Clifton College and heard the story, and I have quoted it from memory entirely, having no access to the publisher's account of it. If, therefore, I am wrong in any detail, I trust my readers will forgive me. The story is true in the main, and its chief point of interest lies in the query, Was Canon Wilson's "experience" due to some strong bond of sympathy between him and his brother, the outcome of which was some strong telepathic influence, or was the superphysical, the Unknown, directly responsible for it?

I heard of another incident, very similar to the above, when I was spending my summer holidays at Newquay, in Cornwall. On the beach one day I made the acquaintance of a boy about my own age, named Ralph Browne, and Browne informed me that he lived with his grandfather, who very distinctly remembered reading in the papers the first announcement of the Battle of Waterloo. Well, it was *à propos* of that famous encounter that Ralph told me a strange story, the truth of which I had no reason to doubt, and which I was afterwards able to corroborate. He said that his grandfather had a brother, John, in the

army in Flanders, to whom he was greatly attached ; and on the day Waterloo was fought he was having tea, when he suddenly gave a loud cry of pain and clapped both hands to his head.

“ Why, whatever’s the matter, Dick ? ” his mother cried, in a great state of alarm. “ Are you ill ? ”

Dick couldn’t speak for some seconds, he was too dazed, but, when his normal faculties returned, he explained that, just as he was about to help himself to a piece of bread and butter, something seemed to strike him so violently on the nape of the neck that, for a second or so, he felt as if his head had been taken right off. There was no renewal of the sensation, and no more was thought about the incident till some time later, when a postboy brought a letter saying that Captain John Browne, attached to the Hanoverian Regiment, had been killed at Waterloo. It transpired that he had been decapitated by a cannon ball, and, in all probability, it had happened at the very moment Ralph’s grandfather had had the experience just narrated.

Another case illustrative of this same curious psychic kind of sympathy, and also of what is commonly called spirit projection, occurred in our midst, when I was still a youth. A friend of ours, whom I will call Miss Webbley, was engaged to be married to a very clever professional man, who, owing to overwork, had a serious breakdown and was in danger of, temporarily, at all events, going off his head. Miss Webbley’s relatives, getting to know of this, at once insisted on her breaking off the engagement, and at length she very reluctantly did so ;

whereupon the young man was naturally very much upset, and became so much worse, in consequence, that he was immediately ordered a long sea-voyage. Fortunately he had sufficient means to enable him to carry out this prescription, and the sea air and complete change of surroundings worked such a marvellous change in him that it was not long before hope of his entire recovery was expressed. In the meanwhile Miss Webbley, in her home at Folkestone, was striving her hardest to destroy all memory of him. Then came an evening which to her dying day she will never forget. Her bedroom faced the sea, and she sat staring out into the wild darkness of the night, whilst the wind beat the rain with almost hurricane force against the window. She had made several attempts to read, but a strange restlessness prevented her from concentrating her mind on anything, and presently she experienced the very strange sensation that she was sinking, sinking right down, down into a bottomless pit full of the most inconceivable horrors. It passed off, but still she sat on, listening to the angry waves on the shore and the wailing and howling of the wind, too fascinated and disturbed, by she knew not what, to make any effort to rise from her seat and go to bed. Then, suddenly, she again experienced the sensation of sinking, and even more acutely than before, whilst, simultaneously, there was a lull in the elements, and she distinctly heard her name called. The voice came from far away across the water, but she recognised it instantly as that of her lover, whom she had been trying so persistently to forget. She reasoned with herself and tried to think that it was all imagination,

but in vain, and as she sat there, straining her ears, she heard the voice again, and this time it was much nearer, and startlingly distinct.

“Emmie! Emmie!” it cried, and silence followed, unbroken, saving for the faint and almost imperceptible breathing of the wind and gentle splashing and pattering of the rain. Then, after an interval of two or three minutes, the voice called to her from close to, and as she leaped to her feet in an agony of doubt and fear, something came into the room and stood by her side. It stood there—she could feel its presence, though she could not see it—for fully a minute, and then quite suddenly it went, whilst the voice called to her again from some little distance off, and yet again, from farther off still. A sensation of the utmost sadness now came over her, and yielding to an irresistible impulse she went and fetched from her writing-table a photograph of her lover, that she had previously hidden from sight, and sat gazing mournfully at it, till she heard the clock on the mantelshelf strike one. Some days later she received tidings of her lover’s death. On the night she had heard him call to her, his ship, on the return voyage, was close into port, and within a comparatively short distance of her home. He was said to be quite cured by the doctor on board, and he had told several of his fellow-passengers that he was eagerly looking forward to getting into harness again, as he was feeling absolutely well; but at about half-past twelve he came up on deck, and, before anyone could stop him, called out “Emmie!” and jumped overboard. The ship was stopped and everything possible was done to try to save him, but he was

never seen again. Miss Webbley subsequently had several offers of marriage, but she refused them all. The memory of her lover's voice calling to her from across the sea haunted her always, and for his sake she lived and died an old maid.

Now, on looking back upon the case, I think that there is in it more than a suggestion that when the bond of sympathy between two persons is very strong, and one of those two persons has an intense affection for the other, or when a person has a very strong yearning for some particular place, something more than mere mental communication occurs; it seems obvious, to my mind, that in these circumstances actual separation of the immaterial from the material body can take place, and the spirit ego be transported into the presence of the beloved one, or to the place beloved, as the case may be, no matter how great the obstacles or the distance that may intervene. Apparently, too, for this to happen, the love and sympathy between the two persons concerned need not be equally strong on both sides, but the person whose immaterial self is projected must possess the capacity for intense concentration. Undoubtedly concentration is one factor, but whether there are other factors essential to projection, over and above those I have named, is, I think, at present entirely a matter of opinion.

I have so often related the case of projection I witnessed as a boy at Newquay, that I shall refer to it only very briefly here.

One morning in August I was standing on the staircase of the house we were lodging in, on Mount

Wise, chatting with my two sisters and old nurse, who were in the hall only a few feet away from me, when something made me look up, and I saw Miss D., a friend who was staying with us, coming down the stairs from the first landing. As she approached, I moved aside to let her pass, and, the staircase being narrow, I felt her dress brush against my legs. She went into the hall, passed by my sisters and nurse, and entered the front sitting-room, slamming the door to behind her. Thinking it rather strange that she did not speak, my sisters and I entered the room, and were astonished beyond measure to find no one there. Now as there was no exit from the room, saving by the doorway through which we had passed immediately after Miss D., what had become of her we could not make out; and when, about a quarter of an hour later, we met her on the beach and learned from her that, at the moment we all saw her in the house, she was walking about the town with a friend, our astonishment knew no bounds. Some years afterwards I sent an account of the phenomenon, signed by the people who had witnessed it, to the Society for Psychical Research.

Now in this instance there was no particular bond of sympathy between Miss D. and myself and sisters; we were merely friends, not even great friends; nor was she in any way attached to the house in which we were staying. So that the only reason I can give for the projection is that, while she was walking with her friend in the town, she unconsciously, and just for the briefest possible period of time, concentrated with extreme earnestness on being back again with us.

I experienced another case of projection some years later, in Northampton. As I was walking down Abingdon Street I saw three people whom I knew well, in fact they were my wife's near relatives, a married lady and her son and daughter, hurrying along, without looking to the right or to the left, as if they were anxious to catch a train, or keep some appointment, and feared being late. I noticed that they were wearing macintoshes and had umbrellas, which appeared to be wet, although there had not been a spot of rain in Northampton all the morning. While I was staring at them they suddenly vanished, where or how I could not for the life of me tell. A few minutes afterwards, I met my wife, and on my telling her that her relatives were in the town, she insisted on my going with her to look for them. However, after searching high and low for them in vain, we drove home; and, on arriving, discovered that the three individuals I had seen in Northampton had not gone there at all. It is true they had made a start (just about the time I saw them in Abingdon Street), but had turned back, owing to a very heavy downfall of rain, a local shower, which had lasted too long for them to make a second attempt. The explanation of the phenomenon in this case would seem to be similar to that in the case of Miss D.; only the phenomenon itself is the more remarkable since it consisted of a projection that was, so to speak, collective. It is quite possible that all three of my wife's relatives were thinking intently, and simultaneously, of being in Abingdon Street, and that triple projection took place; or else, that one of them was thinking of

being there with her two companions, and that for some inexplicable reason—for there was certainly no very strong sympathy between any of us—I caught up the thought.

Yet another case of projection was experienced by me in my childhood days. I was sitting one morning in the breakfast-room of my home in the country when, hearing something scratch against the window, I looked up and saw what appeared to be Pickle, our water-spaniel, pawing the glass, as he always did when he wanted to come in.

“Hulloa !” I exclaimed to my old nurse, who was darning a pair of my stockings, “there’s Pick ! I’ll let him in.”

I went to the window with that intention, but, before I could open it, he had gone. I then went to the back door and called to him, but he did not come, and the cook cried out to me from the kitchen to say that he had been lying close to the fire and had not moved from it all the morning. Well, I searched the garden, which did not take long, as it was quite small, but there was no dog there, and the heavy wooden gate was tightly shut. My nurse was as positive as I was that the dog we had seen at the window was Pickle, and the only conclusion we arrived at was that it was his spirit double, or, as I learned in after years to style it, his projection.

Animals can project themselves as well as humans. Projection would seem, however, to be performed by one just as often during sleep as during the state of being awake.

There is the well-known tale, told by a dozen writers,

of the lady who, on calling at a house one day, was recognised by the inmates as the ghost that they had so often seen at night wandering about the rooms and passages. And that is not all, for, directly the lady entered, she exclaimed excitedly, "Why, this is the house I have so repeatedly seen in my dreams. I seem to know every inch of it!" which was, in all probability, true, as she had apparently been in the habit of visiting it in her immaterial or projected body. I should think it highly likely that what we call dreams, dreams of a peculiarly vivid nature, are in reality projections, probably brought about by the unusually active mind of the dreamer acquiring the amount of concentration necessary for projection during sleep. In this way many so-called hauntings might easily be accounted for.

What strikes one as remarkable, however, is that the projected ego, though seemingly composed of nothing material, otherwise it could not pass through walls and other such opaque objects, should be capable of performing physical actions, such as opening and shutting doors and moving furniture.

When I was living at St Ives, Cornwall, I experimented very earnestly in trying to project my spirit ego. Only, however, on one occasion did I have positive proof that I had succeeded. I was walking, alone, one afternoon along the road leading from Nancledra and Cripple's Ease to St Ives, when I suddenly conceived the idea that I would try to visit my wife and friends in St Ives in immaterial form. The weather was warm and sultry, not a breath of wind blowing, the road deserted, and all the countryside around me very

still—ideal conditions, so it seemed to me, for experimenting. Consequently I tried very hard, as I trudged along, to conjure up in my mind a vivid picture of my wife and home. For a long time I seemed to fail utterly ; just as a really vivid picture seemed about to come, my mind would slip away to something else, and I had to begin all over again. This not once but many times, and I was beginning to despair of ever succeeding, when, somehow, suddenly I saw my house, the smoke rising lazily from the chimney-pots, the garden gate slightly ajar, the conservatory a mass of glittering, sparkling light in the yellow sunshine. I then found myself walking along the gravel path to the conservatory, passing through it, crossing the hall, and pausing with one hand on the handle of the drawing-room door. I heard voices within, my wife's and someone else's. I opened my mouth to call out, to let them know I was back, and behold, at one stroke as it were, the hall, and house, and garden vanished, and I found myself once again out-of-doors, tramping along on the white and dusty highroad. I immediately looked at my watch ; it was just four o'clock. About forty minutes later, when I arrived home, I was greeted by my wife and friends with the remark :

“ Whatever have you been doing ? We heard you come back ever so long ago and call out to us, but when we went to look for you, you were nowhere to be found. It really is too bad ; we've been waiting tea for you ever since, thinking you must be somewhere on the premises. Whatever made you behave in such an extraordinary fashion ? ”

“ What time did you hear me come in ? ” I asked.

“Why, just at four,” my wife replied, “and now it’s nearly five, and we’re simply dying for tea.”

Well, that is the only case with regard to which I have any proof—and I think you must admit the corroborative evidence of several people is a proof—that my experiments in actual spirit projections have succeeded. I have often been asked, were both bodies conscious at the moment of projection, or was only one? Well, as far as I can remember, only one, the immaterial self that actually entered the house; the other one, the material body, was apparently trudging along the road and automatically performing all its normal functions. This is often the case, too, when the subject is suffering from semi-concussion. As I was walking along the side of the swimming-baths at Clifton, one day, a great lout in my form, by way of what he deemed fun, gave me a violent push, presuming, I suppose, I should fall into the water. The boards being very slippery, however, I did no such thing, but fell, instead, on terra firma, giving my head a very hard blow. I got up, staggered away to the box where I had left my clothes, and was beginning to dry myself, when there was a blank, and I remembered no more till I suddenly found myself, to my amazement, in a distant form-room, talking quite naturally and amiably to a boy for whom I had no particular liking. Then, to his astonishment, I began to ply him with endless questions—What hour was it? How came I to be with him? Why were we there? etc.—and gradually he made me understand (though I could not recollect anything I had done in the interval between the fall and my finding myself

in the form-room with him) that I had behaved in quite a natural manner, drying myself, dressing, and chatting with various other boys. What he could not fathom, any more than I could, was why I had asked him, since he had never been on very friendly terms with me, to go for a stroll. I was subsequently told on very excellent authority that the blow I had received had doubtless caused a slight concussion, and that it would explain my peculiar experience. The faculties, or at least some portion of them, had been numbed, but what were left unnumbed had been able to carry on their usual functions automatically, just as had my material body on the Cornish highroad, when my immaterial ego had temporarily left it.

Queer and complex, indeed, is the human, and, as far as that goes, the whole animal, constitution.

## CHAPTER IX

### ON ELEMENTALS AND CURSES

**J**UST a word of warning with regard to Projection before I pass on to the main subject of this chapter. I am sure that Projection may entail, at times, no small amount of physical danger. I have seen many indications that such is the case, and the statements in this connection of an old friend of mine are, I think, most convincing.

“There is one spot,” he said, “that I constantly visit.” (He was absolutely certain, of course, that some of the very vivid adventures he had, while presumably asleep, were no dreams at all, but due to the fact that his spirit was actually out of his body undergoing all the experiences he was conscious of.) “It is a narrow winding roadway, leading through a terribly dark and dreadful-looking forest jungle. Night-birds wail, monkeys chatter, beasts of prey roar, and I grope my way through the shadows and branches that constantly bar my progress, my heart sick with terror, lest a tiger or some other monster should suddenly spring out on me. If it did, I am sure I should die of fright.”

“Really die !” I ejaculated.

“Perhaps,” he replied ; “for though my spirit body, only, would actually experience the adventure,

between it and the body that is still lying in my bed there is so strong a link, that what affects the one would, in all probability, affect the other. And my physical or material heart being weak, the fight my immaterial self, which at the time would embrace my consciousness, experienced, might very easily cause it to stop beating."

"Then, very possibly," I remarked, "that would account for some people dying in, what is presumed to be, their sleep."

"I think there is no doubt about it," my friend said. "But don't get alarmed, for not everyone has a weak heart, and not everyone can project himself."

Well, some few weeks after this conversation my old friend was found one morning dead in bed, with his face contorted with terror. The doctor who examined the body said death was due to syncope, and that the heart had long been diseased; but then he did not know about those harrowing jungle experiences which I knew of, and which made me wonder whether the long anticipated tiger had, at last, sprung. Also another person I knew, whose heart was very weak, used to experiment in trying to project himself, and always between the hours of midnight and two A.M., when he said the conditions were best.

"My visualisations get more and more acute with practice," he said, "and I am sure I shall eventually do it all right. The only thing that worries me is the thought that possibly I, that is to say, my conscious projected self, may not be able to get back to my physical body. Something may prevent it."

"What would happen then?" I said.

“ Well,” he replied, “ I suppose I should die. I have an idea the separation of the two bodies cannot last longer than a certain time, without serious results.”

“ And yet you go on experimenting ? ” I observed.

“ Yes,” he said, “ it has an irresistible fascination for me.”

Well, only a short time ago, he was found sitting in an armchair, in his bedroom, dead. He had died about one A.M., and the doctor who was called in to see the body expressed the opinion that death was due to syncope. But what, I wondered, caused that syncope ! Had he been experimenting, as was his wont, in projection ? Had he at last succeeded, and had what he feared actually taken place—*i.e.* had something prevented the immaterial ego from reuniting with his physical self ?

To get on now with my own experiences. I spent several of my school holidays in Wales and the Midlands, and I there met with more adventures of a ghostly nature. You may ask how it was that I, unlike the majority of people, was so constantly experiencing the superphysical, and my reply to that is, as I have suggested earlier in this book, that, very possibly, there was something about me—in my character, or appearance, or in my family history—maybe in all three combined—that attracted the denizens of ghostland, and brought them to my side whenever I happened to be within their pale. Besides, I was always so keenly interested in everything to do with the occult that, if there were a haunted place anywhere within reach of me, I invariably went there, and, so to speak, met them half way.

On one visit to an old country house, not very far from Northampton, I saw what I took to be a lady in a grey silk dress pass through my room as I lay in bed. She looked quite natural, like any ordinary woman, saving that her dress, even to anyone as ignorant as I was then about ladies' costumes, seemed somewhat old-fashioned; but, as I was not aware that there was anyone staying in the house at all like her, I mentioned the incident in the morning to the house-keeper, who, with a startled look on her face, very indiscreetly observed:

“Why, you must have seen her!”

I naturally wanted to know who “her” was, and was very reluctantly informed that the house was haunted, and that the lady I had seen was undoubtedly one of the ghosts. I subsequently made the acquaintance of a second ghost, one that was much more alarming. It happened thus. Over an old disused barn on the premises was a large loft, and noticing, perhaps, that I had been looking at it with some interest, the gardener, who kept his tools there, advised me not to go near it. Now there is always something peculiarly fascinating about a forbidden spot, and this fascination, in my case, proved so irresistible that one afternoon I took advantage of the gardener's absence, and paid a surreptitious visit to the barn. There was no one about when I entered the building, and all was very still, as I climbed the ladder and clambered on to the floor of the loft, which, despite its height and the bright sunshine outside, looked gloomy and forbidding. Also, it was a very untidy place, débris of all kinds piled up everywhere, and

in one corner a huge dilapidated chest, minus a lid. I was about to cross the floor, to peer into this antiquated object, when a tall figure leaped out of it and confronted me. I cannot say very definitely what this figure was like, because for one thing I was too scared to analyse it closely, and for another thing it was partially concealed by the gloom. However, I received the impression that it was only semi-human in appearance, the legs and arms resembling those of a very thin person, whilst the face bore little if any likeness at all to either man or woman. It was rectangular in shape, like a long box standing upright, absolutely flat, with two slits like eyes, and large pointed ears. I could see no hair, and its whole surface, for it was quite nude, gleamed white. I could feel it was thoroughly evil and hostile, and my terror was so great that I turned on my heels and fled, literally tumbling down the ladder, but, fortunately, with no other results than a severe shaking. When I told the gardener, who was very kind and somewhat partial to me, what I had seen, he looked very startled, and said :

“There, didn’t I tell ’ee not to go near the loft. Many years ago, long before I came ’ere, a tramp ’anged ’isself up there, and ever since then the place ’as been ’aunted. I seed just the same thing there myself once, and so ’as several other people, but whatever ’ee do, Master Ellie, doant ’ee say a word about it to the missus, or I shall lose my place.”

I kept his secret, and I never went near the spot again. But what was the ghost, for ghost I was positive it was. Was it the spirit of the tramp, earthbound and terrible to look at, on account of

vicious propensities, or was it an elemental, whose speciality it was to tempt people to suicide, and who, for some incomprehensible reason, was anchored to that spot?

To continue. I left school at a very early age owing to ill-health, and for the sake of my health was for a time a pupil on a farm in Scotland. Naturally, as my readers may imagine, I cared little for sowing seeds and tending cattle, and consequently made little progress in agrarian work; but, whilst I was thus employed, I added considerably to my experiences with the Unknown, and therefore did not look upon this epoch in my life with any disfavour.

I made many excursions into the country, and one day I rode on my bicycle to an old castle near the Firth of Tay. It was undergoing repairs, and some of the workmen with whom I got into conversation informed me that it was haunted by the ghost of Cardinal Beaton, who, according to tradition, had only one leg.

"I can't say that we've ever seen anything," their spokesman asserted, "but we've certainly heard queer noises, when we've been working overtime, noises like groans, and moans, and tappings—tappings, that might well be made by someone with a wooden leg, pacing up and down the corridors."

They also told me some interesting things about the Tay Bridge. They said that the night prior to the great disaster of 1879 a party of workmen crossing the bridge saw lights of various colours on the water, moving along in a line with them, and one of their number, a native of the Hebrides, exclaimed at once:

“Those are death-lights. There’ll be a catastrophe of kinds here before very long. You mark my words.”

They did mark his words, and, needless to say, they came true.

One of the workmen at the castle told me also that a man he knew living at Brechin had dreamed three times following, the night prior to the disaster, that if his sister, down South, came home by the ill-fated train she would certainly meet with her death; and the dream so impressed him that in the morning he wired to his sister, begging her to come by some other train. She did so, and, of course, crossed the bridge in safety.

It was while I was in Scotland this time that I formed one of a luncheon-party at which the then steward of Glamis was present. Of course, the talk turned on ghosts, and everyone wanted to know whether there really was anything in the story of the shut-up room or not.

“You are one of the three who are supposed to know the famous secret, are you not?” someone asked him.

“Certainly I am,” he replied.

“Well, is it true?” the questioner persisted.

“Is what true?” the steward responded good-naturedly.

“Why,” went on his catechiser, “that those to whom the secret is told never smile again.”

“I am smiling, am I not?” the steward said with something very like a grin.

“Then there’s nothing in it?” two or three voices exclaimed in chorus.

“I didn’t say that,” the steward retorted, and

nothing would persuade him to pursue the subject further.

I have subsequently met several people who have stayed at Glamis, and they have all held the opinion not only that there is something in the story of the room and the secret, but that the castle harbours more than one ghost, as, indeed, might well be the case, considering its antiquity and history. But Glamis has by no means the monopoly of hauntings in Scotland. I have visited other places, east and west, where ghostly sights and sounds are far from uncommon.

Near Gilburn in Linlithgow, for example, there is a ravine where the ghost of Lady Lilburn, mistress of a former Duke of Hamilton, walks, and where strange shapes and lights may periodically be seen.

Lady Lilburn is said to have thrown herself off the walls of the Duke's castle into the ravine and to have been killed instantaneously. Her story was a sad one, and it so interested me as a boy, that I contrived to visit the spot where the tragedy took place and afterwards to take a stroll through the ravine. It was twilight when I went there, and I certainly saw something queer. It was standing beside a tree, and the impression received—for it was too vague and shadowy for me to see it very definitely—was that it was a huge man, clad from head to foot in some fantastic kind of armour. When I spoke about it afterwards to a man who lived in the neighbourhood, he said at once :

“Oh, there's nothing very remarkable in that. Such things are often seen in the neighbourhood of

the castle at this season of the year (it was September). I have seen one or two strange sights there myself."

I think everyone in Scotland knows the story of Fyvie Castle and the curse pronounced on it by that famous curser, Thomas the Rhymer. There is still a tradition that, while Thomas was hurling his anathema at the castle, a fearful storm—thunder, lightning and rain—suddenly broke out and raged furiously all around Fyvie, saving where the Rhymer stood—and there, dead calm reigned. It was Thomas the Rhymer who, so it was said, cursed the Gordons of Gight to such effect that they are now extinct. Among his prophetic sayings concerning them are the following :—

“ When the heron leaves the tree  
The laird of Gight shall landless be.”

This was fulfilled when the then John Byron married the heiress of Gight, for on that occasion a number of herons, that had for years lived in the branches of a big tree on the estate of Gight, at once quitted the locality and made their home elsewhere ; and soon afterwards Gight passed into the hands of the Earls of Aberdeen.

And, again,

“ At Gight three men by sudden death shall dee  
And after that the land shall lie in lea.”

Which, I was told, was verified thus :

In 1791, Lord Haddo of Gight was killed by a fall from his horse on his estate ; shortly afterwards, one of the servants of the Gordons met with a similar fate,

also on the estate ; while, a little later on, another employee of the family was killed on the estate by the fall of a wall, oddly enough at the very moment he was expressing a sceptical opinion with regard to the prophecy. Soon after this third sudden death the property passed for ever out of the possession of the Gordons, who then became extinct.

Another eerie spot I visited in Scotland, not, for a wonder, connected with the illustrious Thomas, was a piece of ground, near Kieff, called "The Helleman Rig." It was situated on the summit of a gently rising hill and commanded a grand view of several of the surrounding counties. Strange things were alleged to be seen there on certain nights in the year, and it was said that should anyone ever attempt to disturb the rock that stood there, and which was believed to be haunted, nothing would ever go right with them afterwards. They would certainly incur misfortune, and would, in short, be cursed. Whether it was coincidence or otherwise—those living in the locality believed it was otherwise—one man who had been rash enough to attempt to cultivate some of the soil adjoining the rock immediately afterward not only lost several of his best cattle, but was himself smitten with an incurable illness ; while another, who had thoughtlessly struck the rock with a pickaxe, a few days later lost the bulk of his goods in a fire, and nothing he subsequently did ever prospered. Though I saw nothing supernatural when I visited the place, I was conscious of a something unpleasant in the atmosphere, and I was glad to get away from it as soon as possible.

Another cursed spot that I have visited is on a farm near Glenlivet. An old Highlander, who had worked on the farm as a lad, told me that he had many strange experiences there himself.

“There is a stone in one of the farm fields, laddie,” he said, “and on it they say men were once offered as sacrifices to some heathen god. I think, myself, it must have been the de’il. Weel, one day they caught a Christian missionary, stripped the puir man, trussed him like a fowl and put him on the stone. Then, when they had said all their wild prayers and everything was ready, a bonnie lassie of a priestess, wearing white robes and gold bangles on her arms and ankles, sprinkled the face of the holy man with water from a pool near by, and sharpened her knife, all ready to strike. It was then that the missionary uttered his curse.

“‘May this stone,’ he cried, ‘be here for all time as a witness to the cruelties practised by these people, and if any man or woman ever remove it, may ill overtake both them and their families. As for thee, lassie,’ he went on addressing the priestess, ‘thou shalt ne’er quit this spot to the Day of Judgment.’

“That was all he said, and he had hardly uttered the last word, before the priestess drew back his head and plunged her knife into him.

“That is the tradition, laddie,” the old Highlander added, “and all I can say is that many a time when I have passed by the stone at nightfall, I have seen a woman’s figure in a loose, flowing, white garment, with something bright on her arms and ankles, hovering about the stone, and no dog would ever go by her

without whining and making the very de'il of a noise. Once, the farmer who owned the field had the stone removed, but the moment he did so, things began to go wrong with him—he lost his best cattle and horses, and his wife took the fever, and more than that, the most unearthly noises—moans, and groans, and rumblings like thunder—were heard every night in the field where the stone had stood, so that the whole neighbourhood, sent well-nigh daft, rose up against him. He then had the stone put back, and his troubles ceased.”

One day in Montrose I was visiting at a house where there was a cursed bed. It was a grim-looking four-poster, and it stood all by itself in the centre of the room.

“What’s the story attached to it?” I asked the owner of the house, a dour-looking Scot, from whom I anticipated the very briefest reply, and who certainly took me by surprise when he launched forth into the following narrative:—

“About a hundred and thirty years ago,” he said, “an ancestor of mine was poisoned by his wife, and he died in this bed, which, I must tell you, had been in our family from time immemorial. Before he died, however, he wrote on a piece of paper, which he pinned on to the pillow beside him, something to this effect: ‘My curse on the false and cruel jade who has poisoned me. May she live a life of misery, and, when she dies, may her spirit, in the most hideous form conceivable, be tied to the bed I now lie on, which I ordain shall be kept by my descendants for ever as a memento of her treachery. Should anyone disregard this injunction,

even in thought, may he be compelled to sleep in this bed and die in it.'

"It was a strange curse, but the strangest thing about it is that, to some extent, at least, it has been fulfilled—of this there is abundant testimony in our family.

"For instance, one day, one of my great-great-uncles, very foolishly, I think, took it into his head to sell the bed, and still more foolishly decided to sleep in it first just to test the reputation that it had of being haunted, and to prove that it was all nonsense. Apparently his family did their utmost to dissuade him, but he seemed like one obsessed, and would listen to no one. At ten o'clock, armed with a blunderbuss, 'to scare away the spook,' he said, laughingly, he went to bed in good spirits and in his usual health. In the morning he was found dead. The doctor who was called in attributed his death to heart disease, and as a matter of fact his heart was a trifle abnormal, but all the same his relatives and those living in the house with him were fully convinced that his death was due to the curse.

"Another fulfilment of the curse happened in this way. About eighty years ago one of the family came to stay in the house where the bed was, and, hearing the story relating to it, which I have just told, offered to buy it. The owners, however, refused to part with it, whereupon their guest begged them, at least, to allow him to sleep on it.

"'I am a good Presbyter,' he said, 'and will guarantee no ghost nor evil spirit will come anywhere near me.'

“And he was so persistent, that, in the end, his host and hostess gave way, and granted him permission to do as he wished. Well, he slept in the bed, or, at any rate, he got into it, for in the morning, as he did not come down to breakfast, a search was made for him, and he was found dead in the bed with a Bible in one hand and Prayer Book in the other; and again the doctor, who was fetched in, said death was due to heart trouble.

“Yet another fulfilment of the curse happened quite recently. One of my grandfather’s cousins, while on a visit to the family, in whose keeping the bed then was, suggested to them that they should destroy it, adding that the sooner they did so the better.

“That same night he was found lying in the bed, fully dressed, but dead. He had cut his throat. The verdict at the inquest was ‘Suicide during a temporary fit of insanity.’ And that, my grandparents said, might well have been the case, but, as he never showed the slightest sign of insanity prior to his death, we are quite convinced in our own minds that it was the curse that caused the madness through which he killed himself. Hence, of course, indirectly, if not directly, the curse was the cause of his death.”

“And has anything ever been seen?” I asked, gazing with fearful interest at the bed, which, during the last few minutes, seemed to have grown grimmer.

“Yes,” my informant said slowly, “but nothing in the way of an ordinary ghost. When the room is occupied, which is not often, for we never use it, excepting when there is no alternative, the bedclothes have a knack of assuming very queer and ugly shapes,

It sounds incredible, but it is a fact, though a fact, perhaps, that can only be appreciated when one is alone in the room at night. I speak from experience."

"Are the shapes like any object?" I asked, my anxiety now raised to fever-heat.

"Hardly," my informant said, glancing, I thought, a trifle apprehensively at the bed as he spoke; "but sometimes one imagines a huge, ungainly person lying stretched out at full length under the clothes: then, again, the pillow assumes the form of a face that is very grotesque and evil, but lifelike, horribly lifelike; and sometimes, again, on the bed itself, just before one turns back the clothes to get into it, one sees an impression, which, although it has no definite shape, is suggestive of something extremely unpleasant."

"What kind of thing?" I queried.

"I can't say," he replied, shaking his head.

"And you have seen all these things?" I inquired.

"Yes," he said, "I have seen them, so have my sisters, and so have others who have slept here. But, as I said before, to appreciate the uncanny nature of this bed you must occupy the bedroom and be in it at night, alone."

"I think I can appreciate it without that," I said; and, indeed, I could, for, as I stood there, I distinctly felt the presence of something in the room, besides ourselves, something bizarre and inimical, that was sitting on the bed, staring at me.

## CHAPTER X

### ON SCOTTISH FAIRIES

**D**URING my stay in Scotland, I gathered much information with regard to Scottish fairies. According to my notes (I invariably transferred what was told me to a notebook) the fairies in Scotland, like those in Ireland, seem to have deserted many of their former haunts, and are now confined to merely a few localities in the Hebrides, the coast of the Moray Firth, and certain parts of the Southern Highlands. Although, apparently, there is nothing in any of these places to correspond to the Pookah or Leprechaun, Scotland, nevertheless, possesses species of fairies which, as far as I know, are not to be met with in Ireland. I refer to the Glaistig and Gruagach. The former has sometimes been compared with the Banshee, but to anyone who has experienced the Banshee the comparison is ridiculous. In the Banshee there is absolutely nothing of the fairy ; it unquestionably belongs to the genus ghost, and most probably to the species elemental or neutrarian ; but from all I have heard of the Glaistig and Gruagach they are totally unlike the Banshee, and fairies they are, without any doubt.

The Glaistig is, as a rule, very beautiful. She has long golden hair, blue eyes, neat features, lovely hands

and feet, and so great a delicacy and daintiness in her composition, that one finds it very difficult to realise that she can, on occasions, be extremely aggressive and cruel. I met a man from Iona who assured me that belief in the Glaistig was still very strong in that island, and also in Mull and Tiree. He said an uncle of his, while looking after his cattle one day on Heynish Hill, in West Tiree, fell asleep, and was awakened by a sound box on the ears. He looked up in amazement, and beheld the prettiest girl he had ever seen bending over him, smiling roguishly. She had long golden hair and blue eyes, and was clad from head to foot in bright green. Greatly in love with her, in spite of the sharp blow she had given him with her dainty white hands, he begged her to stay and talk to him. She shook her head, however, and, still smiling roguishly, ran away. He followed her at once, and succeeded in catching her by a pool of water.

“If you touch me,” she said, “you’ll be sorry for it.”

Disregarding her warning, however, he took hold of one of her hands, whereupon, to his utter astonishment, she dealt him a cuff with the other that felled him to the ground, and while he was lying there, helpless and bewildered, she produced a long twig and began beating him with it.

It was in vain he tried to stop her, for her eyes were fixed on his, and so long as she kept looking at him, he was unable to move either hand or foot. Thus, heedless of his cries for mercy, she went on thrashing him, until he was covered with blood, when she left off, and telling him he must come again to that spot, to meet her, in the dead of the following night, suddenly

and quite inexplicably vanished. He then knew she was a glaistig, and, feeling sore in soul and body, hastened home. The following evening he was seized with so great a yearning to see her again, that, at last, he could not prevent himself yielding to it, and, consequently, he set off exactly at the stroke of twelve, to Heynish Hill. When he got there, he found her waiting beside the pool, looking more beautiful than ever. Hopelessly in love now, he knelt on the grass before her, whilst, in spite of his entreaties to be spared, she thrashed him, even harder than before.

“You will come to me again to-morrow night,” she said, still fixing him with her eyes.

“But I won’t,” he moaned; “after your cruel treatment of me, I’ll never come near you again.”

“Won’t you?” she laughed; “you can’t help yourself. You will never now be free from me. Listen, should you try to escape me, you will one night see by your side a big black bird. You will recognise it as my signal, and knowing I have sent for you, you will be obliged to come.”

She then vanished, and he went home cursing her. The next day, in the hope that by so doing he would be rid of her, he went to stay with some friends, who lived some distance off, on the mainland. There he passed several nights without any yearning to see her, and he was beginning to congratulate himself on being free from her at last, when the unexpected happened. Accompanied by one of his friends, he was swimming in the loch near their house, when, suddenly, he saw a huge black bird (his friend saw it, too) with curved beak and shining eyes swoop down beside him. Crying

out, "The black bird, the black bird ! For God's sake keep it away from me !" he immediately sank, and never rose to the surface again. Having concluded this story, which he assured me was true in every detail, my informant went on to tell me he knew a man in Tiree, who was crossing the Heynish Hill, late one night, when he met a beautiful glaistig, who said to him :

"Would you like to know your future ? "

"Very much," the Tiree man replied.

"Very well," the Glaistig replied, "I will tell it you, if you consent to being, first, whipped by me."

She looked so fragile and dainty, and, withal, so wonderfully pretty, that the idea of being whipped by her struck the Tiree man as ludicrous, and he could hardly speak for laughing.

"Go ahead, lassie," he said, at last, "you may beat me to your heart's content. I'll nae say a word, so long as you'll permit me to gaze into your eyes."

The Glaistig smiled, and, bidding him kneel in front of her, produced a twig, with which she whipped him so soundly all over his arms, and legs, and body, that, although a strong, hardy man, he soon cried for mercy. She did not leave off, however, till her twig was broken, and her victim was a mass of weals and wounds. She then told him he would soon leave Tiree, go to Australia, marry a red-haired woman there, who would be very unkind to him, lose his eyesight in a fire, and eventually die, worth a lot of money.

"And I'll be with you at the last," she said, giving him a hard slap on the face.

"Weel," my informant remarked, "every word of

what the Glaistig said came true. My Tíree friend went away suddenly to Australia, married a red-haired girl in Adelaide, who was very unkind to him, lost his sight in a fire in Melbourne, came unexpectedly into a lot of money, and equally unexpectedly contracted a disease, from which he eventually died. His nephew sent me news of his death, and said that, as he was dying, he called out, ‘The Glaistig! the bonnie Glaistig, who beat me! She has come for me at last.’”

A glaistig haunts Loch Coruisk in Skye; another the moorland near Loch Leathan, in the same island; another the Ford of Croisg; while other spots still said to be haunted by them are the waterfall of Bocharoil in Glenorchy; Craignish, where a local farmer was said to have been caught one night by two glaistigs and so severely beaten by them that it was weeks before he properly recovered; the river near Lianachan Castle in Lochaber, and the ruins of Dunnottar. According to Mr J. G. Campbell,<sup>1</sup> a glaistig once haunted Dunstaffnage Castle, where the Scots claim “The Stone of Destiny” was kept for a while, before its removal to Scone; but if what is alleged of her was true—namely, that she merely uttered cries of joy or sorrow before any event in the family at the castle, pulled the clothes off their beds, and stamped up and down the passages—I am inclined to think she was not a fairy at all, but a ghost. The same may be said of “The Lady of Inverawe.” Some writers designate her a glaistig, but, both from tradition and her behaviour, it appears far more likely that she is the ghost of the mistress of a man who once occupied

<sup>1</sup> *Superstitions of the Highlands*, by J. G. Campbell.

the ancient building she now haunts. The experiences of several people, from one or two of whom I have received first-hand accounts, in the old castle of Breacacha in Coll, once the seat of the MacLeans, would certainly make very interesting reading.

In making a comparison of these accounts and deducing therefrom, it would appear that the castle is haunted, periodically, by a glaistig in the form of a little woman with beady black eyes, who not only slaps and pinches those whom she visits, but invariably brings them bad luck.

The Gruagach, which is a kind of cross between a glaistig and a mermaid, is more often than not to be found by the waterside. According to Mr Campbell, one used to haunt a house in Tiree, and beat the servants there if they were idle. I was told they were from time to time to be seen in North Uist, Barra, Stronsay, Coll, and in various parts of the north-east and north-west coasts of Scotland. I never encountered a gruagach myself, and rather envied the experience of an Aberdeen minister, who told me he had seen what he believed to be one in his youth, when he was out boating, one night, off the Northern coast of the Moray Firth.

He said that, hearing his name called in a very soft yet clear voice, he looked up, and saw, peering down at him from a rock, a being, which instinct at once told him was supernatural. It resembled a very beautiful girl with long yellow hair and large blue eyes. She smiled at him in quite a friendly manner, but, while he was still gazing at her, suddenly vanished, reappearing some minutes later, on the summit of

another rock, some little distance off. He learned afterwards that many of the fishermen in the neighbourhood had had a similar experience to his, and that they and others residing in that locality firmly believed that the coast along which he had been boating was haunted by a *gruagach*. She was, however, quite harmless, they said, and her appearing had no particular significance. Another *gruagach* story told me was of one that attached itself to a Highlander named M'Alister. It used to torment him at night by pulling the clothes off his bed, and making such a clatter with the fire-irons that he could not sleep; but, on the other hand, if anyone tried to do him an injury, it used to take up the cudgels on his behalf, and torment them to such an extent that they were often terrified almost out of their senses.

A semi-water spirit, or elemental, called the water-kelpie, still haunts, so it is affirmed, the more remote parts of Scotland. It is generally in the form of a horse, and usually to be found near fords, pools, and lonely pieces of water. A peasant working on a farm in Forfarshire told me a water-kelpie used to haunt the river, near his old house, in Glen Avon. He said one night, when he was out late, tending some cattle that were sick, he heard a great commotion by the riverside, and, on hastening to see what it was, found his master's horses, all huddled together, snorting and stamping, whilst a white shadowy form something like a horse, and not unlike a cow, stood close to them. He picked up a stone to throw at it and scare it away, and it was not until he saw the stone go right through it and fall into the water beyond, that he realised it

was either a ghost or a fairy. He was then much alarmed, and stood quite still and stared at it, repeating the Lord's Prayer aloud, and, as he did so, the thing began to grow fainter and fainter, until it suddenly disappeared altogether. He said people he knew had often seen the same thing in the same spot, and, on several occasions, while they were watching it, it turned into an old woman with long, white, matted hair, who had shaken her fist at them and then disappeared in the water. The change from an animal into a human being would seem to be a common enough occurrence in the case of the Scottish water-kelpie, which, in that respect, resembles the Irish pookah. Brownies are another species of semi-ghost, semi-fairy, that haunt Scotland. When I was in the neighbourhood of Kilmarnock, I was pointed out a spot in the stream that flows underneath Cranfurdlund Bridge, where a great treasure is reputed to lie hidden, and to be jealously guarded by a brownie. It appears that brownies specialise in guarding treasures, and certainly in this case it seems to be a common belief that, whenever an attempt has been made to drag the stream, in order to get the treasure, strange phenomena have been either seen or heard there,<sup>1</sup> owing to which, or to some other untoward happening, the proceedings have invariably been stopped. Another place connected with a brownie, which I visited, and which struck me as quite one of the grimmest I have ever seen, was the ruins of Hermitage Castle. It was here, chiefly, in the Middle Ages, that the two famous sorcerers, Michael Scot and Lord Soulis, practised their

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, by Mr Chambers.

Black Arts; but the associations of the place are the more generally centred round Lord Soulis, who was said to have sold himself to the devil, and to have been responsible for the constant disappearances of women and children in that neighbourhood. Rumour said he offered them as sacrifices to the Evil One, who otherwise would have carried him off; and so great a horror and detestation did he inspire, that he was finally seized, put in a cauldron of cold water and slowly boiled, before the walls of his own dwelling. Ever since then, it is said, the castle has been haunted by his spirit, that, in a variety of forms, all inconceivably weird and terrible, continually battles with a brownie for the possession of his ill-gotten wealth, which is hidden in the precincts, though where, no one, as yet, has ever been able to discover.

I could well imagine anything happening in the place, for no atmosphere has struck me as being more suggestive of the utterly grim and horrible.

The last notes I made, during this visit to Scotland, refer to ordinary fairies. In appearance they would seem generally to be much taller than the ordinary Irish fairy, and not so vague and shadowy—in fact more like an ordinary human being. It appears that they are usually clad in green, and though often quite harmless, play all manner of pranks—stealing children and bewitching cattle and horses. Apparently, they prefer to manifest themselves only in the gloaming, and, like human beings, they studiously avoid ghostly localities and haunted houses. Also, they never go near a spot where blood has been spilt. On the question of immortality, there would seem to be a

diversity of opinion. The majority of Scottish peasants with whom I discussed this subject inclined to the belief that fairies, while living longer than humans, finally die without any hope of a futurity. Only the comparative few credited the fairy with the privilege—if, so be, it is a privilege—of immortality.

## CHAPTER XI

### FURTHER IRISH EXPERIENCES

FROM Scotland I went to an army tutor's in Clifton and then to Dr Chetwode Crawley's Coaching Establishment in Ely Place, Dublin. It was while I was working up for my examination for the now defunct Royal Irish Constabulary that I had my first experience with a strangling ghost.

It was in a house close to the Waterloo Road. I had retired to rest early, and having undressed, blown out the light, and got into bed, was preparing to lie down, when I saw something opposite me, by the foot of the bed, move. The room, I must explain, was not entirely dark; the thick plush curtains that hung before the windows did not quite meet, and from between them stray beams of moonlight filtered through on to the carpet and furniture. Wondering whether my senses had deceived me, I stared hard, and presently, "whatever it was" moved again, and a dark shadowy form rose from the floor and came stealthily towards me. I could not see it very clearly, but the impression I received was of something grotesque, semi-human, and extremely sinister. I tried to get up, but a kind of paralysis held me limb-bound, and I was in this helpless condition, when it finally bent over me. I then felt cold, bony fingers catch me by the throat and press me

forcibly back on to the pillow. I gasped, choked, and suffered excruciating pain. There was no relaxation, however; the pressure only grew more and more intolerable, until, at last, after what seemed an eternity, there was a violent buzzing in my ears and I lost consciousness. When I came to, I was too unnerved at first to open my eyes, but when I did, in the end, summon up the courage to look around, there was nothing to be seen, beyond the white moonbeams and the dark outlines of the familiar furniture. I got up and searched the room thoroughly; the window was bolted, there was nothing in the cupboard, nothing under the bed, nothing anywhere. I then got back into bed, but, as I dreaded the thought of being in the dark again, I did not put out my candle. I kept it burning till the morning.

After breakfast, I recounted the incident to my landlady, who at first pooh-poohed the idea of ghosts, but finally confessed that the room she had given me was said to be haunted. The house, she explained, had once been used as a private home for mentally afflicted people, and she had heard that someone, either a patient or one of the nurses, died in the room she had given me, under rather painful circumstances. When I asked to be transferred elsewhere she made no demur, and I passed that and many subsequent nights quite peacefully on another landing.

Now some people aver that they never have been and never would be afraid of what they term ghosts; and this type of person has often said to me in very superior tones, after I have narrated some of my experiences :

“ You don’t mean to say you were frightened ? No ghost has ever in the least degree scared ME.”

Well, invariably my reply to that has been :

“ Perhaps you have never really seen one ! ” and I doubt if they have.

The so-called spirit at a spiritistic materialising séance is one thing, and a phantom in a *bonâ-fide* haunted house is quite another. Some of the bravest soldiers and sailors, men who have really done something, have not been ashamed to admit to me that they have been horribly afraid when brought face to face with something they realised did not belong to this world. It has been so from days immemorial : it was certainly so in the days of the Bible, for when angels visited the earth, it is clear that at the sight of one even the very best of men trembled. Why, then, should people who cannot show that they are either particularly good or particularly courageous, prove braver in the presence of a ghost than recognised heroes and saints ? This pseudo-bravery can, I think, have only one explanation. Provided they are not merely “ swanking,” those who boast of it have never seen a real ghost ; what they saw, if they saw anything at all, was subjective—the projection, so to speak, of their own brain. For my own part I have had perilous adventures of all kinds in the wilds of America, and in many European cities ; and I can honestly say that I have never really funkèd them. But I must admit that when I have been alone, and have seen or felt, sometimes both, what my reason and instinct have told me was something superphysical, I have been, as, I am sure, everyone in the same circumstances would

have been, much afraid. Occasionally, perhaps, when the manifestations have been only slight, or what I have seen has been neither unpleasant nor inimical, my fear has not been quite so pronounced, and the shock—for there is always bound to be a shock—at the presence of the superphysical has not unnerved me to the same extent.

The degree of fright depends, I think, on the nature of the phenomenon. What I term the semi-human type of elemental or neutrarian certainly terrifies me far more than anything else.

In the case of animals the effect of an encounter with ghosts is even more marked, I think, than in the case of human beings. The dog and horse, that know no fear in a fight or in the hunt, invariably show fear when in the presence of a *bonâ-fide* spirit from another world. I have proved this myself when riding in the forests and other lonely parts of the Far West, and when conducting investigations in a haunted house or locality. If it does nothing else, a horse will always shy, when passing a haunted spot, and a dog will always whine, or howl, or give some other indication of intense fear at the advent of a spirit, and often for several moments preceding that advent.

The fact that materialisations at séances, conducted by professional “mediums,” have no effect on dogs—I have put this to the test dozens of times—is, in my opinion, another proof that such materialisations are either absolute fakes, or exist solely in the minds of those desirous of believing in them.

And now to proceed. Soon after my experience in the house near the Waterloo Road, I went with

one of my fellow-students to a haunted house in Monkstown. The people who lived in it were away, and my friend had permission to spend a night there, provided he promised not to do or say anything that would lead to the haunting becoming known to the general public.

It was just an ordinary modern villa, with nothing in its outside appearance to distinguish it from any other house in the road. It was my first attempt at an investigation, and my excitement was unbounded when we arrived upon the scene at about ten P.M. In those days pocket-flashlights were not in vogue, and we had to be content with an ordinary bull's-eye lantern and wax candles. After making a thorough search of the house and peering into every nook and corner, to satisfy ourselves that no one was hiding, we eventually decided to sit on the staircase leading from the hall to the first landing, and wait there for anything that might happen.

For some time we kept up an animated conversation on football—we had a very strong rugger team at Crawley's; three of the XV had their International caps—but, nothing exciting happening, we gradually grew sleepy and eventually dozed off. I awoke with a start to hear a loud mocking laugh, apparently just behind us. I turned round in alarm, but could see no one—nothing.

“Did you hear that?” I whispered, nudging my companion.

“I did,” he replied, “and it came from upstairs. Supposing we have another look there.”

I knew from the tone of his voice he by no means

relished the prospect, and I am sure I didn't, but I rather reluctantly acquiesced, and, armed with a couple of lighted candles, we made a thorough search of the upper part of the house. There was nothing there, nothing at least that could in any way explain the noise.

"Well," my friend said, looking at his watch, "it's just two. I don't suppose anything further will happen. What do you say to walking back to our digs in Dublin?"

I was opening my mouth to reply, when once again we heard the laugh, just a chuckle, but horribly mocking and malicious. For some seconds we were too aghast to say anything, and then my friend exclaimed, in anything but his usual proper tones:

"Well, I'm damned! Where did that come from?"

"I think from the same place," I replied. "Shall we go?"

My friend did not make any verbal reply; he simply opened the hall door, and I followed him silently and swiftly out into the night. I did not go to the house again, but, soon after the owner returned, my friend went to see him and came on to me in a great state of excitement.

"Such a piece of news!" he burst out. "I've just been to see R., and the first thing he said to me was: 'Well, did you hear the laugh?' So you see that was the ghost we heard, and R. says it always laughs in that beastly mocking fashion."

"And is nothing ever seen?" I asked.

"No," my friend replied, "nothing. The last tenant of the place, who died there shortly before R. bought

it, was a lawyer with a very shady reputation, and it is his ghost, R. thinks, that haunts it."

"Have they ever tried to lay it?" I asked.

"Crowds of times," my friend answered. "Obviously some ghosts can't be laid."

And subsequent experience has proved to me the truth of this assertion. To talk of "laying" ghosts in the airy fashion some "psychic experts" talk of it is ridiculous. Were it such an easy thing to do, the ghosts at Glamis, Hampton Court, and other notoriously haunted places would surely have been laid long ago; and as for the Banshee, the Hag of the Dribble, and the White Lady of the Hohenzollerns, they would long ago have ceased to exist. Over and over again the attempt has been made to get into conversation with these apparitions, and over and over again it has failed. Hence, there seems to be some power behind them that forbids them communicating with earthly beings, and wills that they shall go on manifesting. In a few instances, only, of hauntings has this power apparently willed otherwise, and then the ghosts "laid" (mostly, I believe, by Roman Catholic priests, the Roman Catholic Church being, in all probability, the most versed and experienced in genuine spiritual matters) have been the ghosts of people who have died sane.

Many hauntings are, without doubt, due to the earth-bound spirits of those who have died insane, and upon such spirits the ministrations of a priest would, of course, have no effect. Sensations of strangulation, such as I have experienced, and the apparently purposeless and senseless antics that are commonly

attributed to poltergeists are, in my opinion, due in the former case to the earthbound spirits of violent lunatics, and in the latter to the earthbound spirits of lunatics of a milder order; and I think if the history of houses where such phenomena occur were delved into, it would be found that they had, at one time or another, been occupied by persons who had died insane.

Lunatic asylums are frequently haunted, and a very authentic instance of one is given in my work entitled *Ghosts Harmful and Helpful*.<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, perhaps, since it must be obvious from what I have already said, I believe that when physical dissolution takes place, the spirit of the so-called dead passes on without any change of character or personality—that is to say, if a person is insane, when he dies, he continues insane on the Other Side; and I repeat that any attempt to reason with or “lay” lunatic spirits must prove futile and abortive. Efforts “to lay” would be quite ineffectual, too, when dealing with prophetic spirits of the order of family and national ghosts, such as the “Drummer of Cortachy” and, as I have said before, the Irish Banshee and Welsh Hag of the Dribble.

This class of phantasm is obviously sent for a specific purpose, and puny man can neither hinder nor prevent it fulfilling its mission. And the same applies to elementals. Experience with this species of ghosts has persuaded me that certain of them, the semi-human kind for example, are, in all probability, no more capable of conversing with us, than are sharks

<sup>1</sup> Published by W. Rider, 1924.

and gorillas, and their mode of communicating with each other is very possibly akin to that employed by wild animals.

And, lastly, there is the case of the Phantasm of the Living. The bumptious individual who proposes "to lay" ghosts quite overlooks the fact—and there is very little doubt it is a fact—that many cases of haunting are due, as I have already stated in this volume, not to phantasms of the dead at all, but to phantasms of the living—people who are not even always conscious that they have projected themselves.

To attempt "to lay" ghosts of this order is obviously absurd.

To continue. My efforts to get into the R.I.C. were not successful, as, owing to varicose veins in my left leg, I failed to pass the medical examination. Hence I left Crawley's sooner than I otherwise should have done, and it was shortly after I returned to Clifton, and just before I embarked on my unlucky expedition to the Far West, that I, once again, heard spirit laughter. It was a still night in June, and I awoke from a deep sleep to hear, close to me, a loud laugh, full of devilish mockery and glee. It was, in fact, so absolutely devilish, that the passage of years has not only failed to blot it from my mind, but has not even tempered the acuteness of my recollection of it. I might add that had I previously been sceptical, even in the slightest degree, as to the existence of a spirit world, the moment I heard that laugh, all doubt would have vanished, for I am quite sure that only a spirit of the most evil and antagonistic description could have been responsible for it. It was not repeated,

and I have never heard it since. I have often thought, however, that it may have emanated from the earth-bound spirit of someone who, in his or her lifetime, hated my family and was chuckling over either my failure at Crawley's, or my impending fruitless and calamitous expedition to the Far West.

As alternatives to this explanation of the laugh it might, perhaps, have emanated from the head my sisters saw, or from some spirit that had attached itself to me during one of my recent adventures.

I had one other experience in Ireland, and it took place on the eve of my departure. I had arrived in Cork, and on behalf of a friend whom I had just left I went to an estate agent to inquire if he had any cheap house on his books that would suit a widowed lady of small independent means.

"Why, yes," he said, "I know of just the place. A little house in a hollow about two miles from the town. If you care to see it, my clerk, Murphy, can go with you and show you over it now."

I agreed to this proposal, and accompanied by Murphy set out from the office without delay.

When, at last, we arrived within sight of the house (it was much farther from the town than the agent had led me to suppose), I found that it was situated in a slight dip or hollow, close to a brook, upon the banks of which I could see the rankest sedges, and rows of tree trunks, seemingly, in the last stage of decay. A more dreary and depressing scene I had never looked upon, and, as we crossed the bridge over the brook, I felt a wholly unaccountable chill, accompanied by a spasm of fear, suddenly run through

me. I glanced at Murphy, and fancied I saw him give a slight shiver.

Having now reached the house, which Murphy informed me had once been a mill, we entered, and first of all glanced at the rooms on the ground floor. Then we ascended the stairs, and, as we did so, I fancied I could detect a slight sound, that was extremely like very soft and surreptitious footsteps, while I also experienced a curious sensation of being watched. I asked Murphy if we were alone in the house.

“Yes,” he said, “saving for the owls, which are a perfect pest.” But all the same I noticed that he looked rather pale, and that he glanced around him in a strangely apprehensive manner. Upstairs the rooms were all intensely gloomy, and as we passed from one to another, our heavy boots awakening a dozen and one strange, reverberating echoes, I thought I had never before experienced such a loneliness and utter desolation.

We felt miles away from anywhere, and completely out of touch with the rest of humanity. When we returned to the ground floor, and visited the kitchens and other offices in the rear of the premises, the air smelt warmer, as if that part of the house had been more recently occupied. I noticed, too, some cigarette ashes lying about, and called the clerk’s attention to them.

“I see you’ve had plenty of people to look over the place,” I remarked; “or is there a caretaker?”

“There’s no caretaker,” Murphy said, looking about him with the same startled expression I had seen on his face when we entered the building. “It’s probably

someone who has got in without leave. They will do that, no matter how carefully the doors are locked. It is the same with most empty houses in the country."

"Tramps, I suppose?" I said.

"Yes," he replied. "Most likely. There are a good many about at this time of year."

"Well," I said, "I won't trouble you to show me any farther. I've already made up my mind. The house won't suit my friends at all, it wants far too much doing to it; besides, it is too lonely, and there is a something in the atmosphere I don't like at all. I think it would be dear at half the sum you name."

"But think of the ground belonging to it," he said. "Why, there are nearly three acres."

"That may be," I responded; "but it is too low-lying, and would be like a swamp in the winter. No, I couldn't advise my friends to take it."

He did his best to persuade me to reconsider my decision, but all to no purpose. The place repelled me; and as I recrossed the bridge over the brook, I again experienced a sudden feeling of unaccountable icy coldness, accompanied by one of the most intense horror. On my return to Cork, I made numerous inquiries with regard to the house, and eventually elicited the information that both it and the bridge over the brook were supposed to be haunted, that being the reason of its having stood so long unoccupied. My informant on this point told me that about sixty years previously, an old farmer, named Patrick Mac-something or other, I forget what, lived there, and that early one morning his body had been found in the stream under the bridge with his head

battered in. Though no one was ever arrested for the murder, suspicion fell on his married daughter and her husband, who kept house for him, and so strong was the feeling against them, that they had in the end to leave the neighbourhood. The house then, after standing empty for a year or so, was taken by a Mr Brown, who spent a lot of money on it in alterations and repairs, but occupied it for only a very little while, owing, it was rumoured, to the strange things that took place there. My informant went on to say that on every anniversary of the murder the ghost of old Patrick was to be seen walking over the brook bridge, whilst, at the same time, groaning and grinding sounds, as of a mill-wheel, could be distinctly heard.

“I have experienced both phenomena,” my informant observed, “and I could name a dozen other people who have done so, too; but what is so perplexing now, is that, whereas the hauntings used to be confined to one night in the year, they have recently taken to occurring much more frequently. Only last week Farmer Johnston, on returning home from the market here, was well-nigh scared to death by seeing something very dreadful on the bridge, while a gentleman and a lady who went to look at the house one evening heard such terrible noises in it, that they simply ran for their lives.”

“Do you think if I went there I should see anything?” I asked, hardly able to restrain my excitement.

“I think it is quite likely,” my informant replied. “Especially if you go to-morrow, which is the anniversary of the murder.”

I did not say anything further, but the following night saw me setting off alone to the hollow. The place somehow exercised a strange fascination over me. I felt by instinct it was haunted, and haunted by something peculiarly interesting. It was about eleven o'clock when I left Cork, and nearly twelve when I arrived within sight of the hollow. Everything was very still; not even a leaf stirred; whilst overhead hung a glorious harvest moon, which illuminated the whole surrounding scenery.

As I descended the decline and advanced towards the bridge, the distant sound of a clock striking midnight fell with startling distinctness on the absolutely still and silent air, and I was listening to the last stroke when I suddenly perceived the door of the empty house slowly open and a tall figure, swathed from head to foot in what looked like a winding-sheet, appear on the threshold. The vision was so totally unexpected that I at once came to an abrupt halt, and gazed at it in utter amazement. For some minutes it remained stationary, and then, slowly descending the old moss-covered steps with a gliding motion, moved down the path leading to the road. On and on it came, through the rusty iron gate, which swung open at its touch with a loud creak and groan, on to the white, gleaming highroad, and then straight towards where I was standing. Though much alarmed at the sight of such a strange apparition in that intensely lonely spot, and amid all that uncanny moonlight and silence, I retained sufficient possession of my faculties to notice one or two idiosyncrasies.

To begin with, instead of gliding through the gate

after the fashion of a spectre, the "thing" had pushed it open; then, again, when it came out on to the road, its footsteps, which sounded very heavy for a ghost, awoke loud echoes; and lastly, the white stuff, which was swathed round it, though presenting a quite filmy appearance in the distance, looked more and more material and like ordinary bed-linen, the nearer the figure drew. Convinced at last that it was no ghost at all, but merely some hoaxer, my fears instantly vanished, and, advancing to meet it, I indignantly ordered it to throw aside its disguise and stop trying to frighten me. It took no notice, however, but advancing close to me, suddenly raised both its arms above its head and gave a hideous, but absolutely human, yell. I sprang forward, and catching hold of the sheet tore it from the figure's head, disclosing one of the most sinister and unsavoury faces I have ever seen.

"Who are you?" I stammered. "And what do you mean by trying to frighten me?"

"Who am I?" the fellow snarled. "What's that to do with you? I hate toffs and I'm going to damn well do you in."

He made a rush forward as he spoke, and I had quite given myself up for lost, for he was far heavier and stronger than I was, when to my astonishment he suddenly halted, and stood staring fixedly at some object behind me. I then glanced round and saw the shadowy outlines of what looked like a tall man in black rapidly approaching the bridge and making straight for us. I was about to appeal to him for aid, when I heard a stampede of footsteps, and, turning

round, saw my adversary running away in the direction of the house for all he was worth. Greatly relieved, I turned again to look at the man in black, but, to my intense surprise, he had disappeared. There was the long vista of the road in front of me, with low hedges on either side, and beyond them fields, but no sign of a human figure anywhere—nothing but grass and moonbeams.

The knowledge that the figure in black was something superphysical then came home to me, and feeling a bit shaken at what I had undergone I made hurried tracks for home. The next day I called at the agent's and narrated to him my experience.

“Murphy told me he thought someone was hiding there,” he said. “I must put the police on them.”

But whether he did so or not I don't know, as I had to continue my journey that evening, and I have never been in Cork since.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOME QUEER HAPPENINGS IN THE UNITED STATES

I SAILED to New York in the old *Majestic*, a ten-thousand tonner, and in those days deemed one of the biggest and fastest ships afloat. Among the passengers were B. M. Croker, "Boss" Croker of Tammany fame, Lord Randolph Churchill and Julius Price, the black-and-white artist, whose sad death occurred only a short time ago. Nothing, however, of psychic interest occurred during the voyage, not, indeed, until I had been in New York some days. It so happened, then, that I met a man at the Central Hotel, Broadway, who told me he knew of a curious case of haunting in an office in Franklin Square. It was a case, he said (I quote his actual words), of a regular "tricky" ghost. Pens and ink and other articles were constantly missed, to be subsequently found stowed away in the most out-of-the-way and un-get-at-able places. Water was constantly thrown at people, and on more than one occasion considerable alarm had been caused by terrific crashes, as if a cartload of crockery had been dashed from a great height on to the floor. Nothing, however, had been seen.

"If you would like to spend an evening there," he said, "I will take you round; but you must promise

you won't divulge the number, because, if you do, I shall get into trouble with the owner of the office, who does not want the affair to get into the papers."

I promised, and he proved as good as his word. We went there together one evening at about nine o'clock. Saving for a porter at the main entrance to the building, we saw no one on the premises, and we had the alleged haunted office completely to ourselves. For an hour or so nothing happened, and I was beginning to think that, in all probability, nothing would happen, when I heard a sound like the rush of water, and my companion sprang to his feet, spluttering and shaking his hair and coat collar. His head and coat were literally saturated.

I looked everywhere but could see nothing that could in any way account for the apparent phenomenon.

"That's the first time it's ever happened to me," my companion remarked, drying himself, as best he could, with his pocket-handkerchief, "and I'm not anxious to have another dose. Come along."

I tried to persuade him to stop, to see if anything further would take place, but he wouldn't; and as he certainly looked very pale and scared, and must have felt uncommonly uncomfortable in his wet clothes, I did not press the matter. We came away, and I did not have another opportunity of visiting the office again. If it were a case of common or garden trickery, encompassed by my companion, whom I was watching continually out of the corner of my eyes, or a confederate—I repeat I had thoroughly searched the room—all I can say is, that it was far cleverer than anything I have ever seen done by any professional

magician ; but my own impression is that it was a *bonâ-fide* case of haunting, due either to some mysterious elemental, or what is, perhaps, more likely, to the earthbound spirit of someone who had " something against " the present owner of the office.

One or two evenings after this adventure I crossed to Hoboken to try to find an old Dublin friend, who had written to me several times from an address in that quarter of New York. After much searching I found the hotel I was looking for, but not my friend ; he had left some time ago, and gone no one in the place knew whither. My excursion into that locality, however, was by no means lacking in interest, for in the hotel where I had hoped to find my friend I met two men, like myself, strangers in New York, who invited me to go for a stroll with them, and proved very amusing and entertaining companions. Where we went, goodness alone knows, but, after wandering through, so it seemed to me, miles of streets and alleys, we eventually came to a shoddy-looking music-hall.

" Let's go in," one of my companions, a school-master from Cape Town, said. " I'm not keen on their entertainment, but I'd give something to sit down and rest for a while."

Well, we paid a few cents at the door, and, entering, found ourselves in a big room or hall full of small tables, seated at which was about as cosmopolitan a crowd as one could find anywhere—Germans, Poles, Italians, Jews—some poorly and others flashily dressed, but all comparatively orderly and out to enjoy, in a good-humoured way, anything put before them. My other companion, a Canadian, was inclined

to be a trifle petulant. After watching several turns he ejaculated :

“ Well, I never ! And to think this is New York City ! Why, I thought a show of this kind was only to be met with at fairs, such as we have round about Winnipeg and out West. A match, please.”

I handed him one, and turned my attention to the stage again just as an oddly assorted trio, consisting of a tall, lean man in short pantaloons and a Piedmontese hat, a very short woman in a flaring red dress, and a pretty fair-haired girl of about twelve in a flimsy green costume, came on to it. The woman made some remark in Italian and commenced beating a big drum, the tall man joined in on a long reed pipe, while the little girl, holding a tambourine in one hand and banging on it with the other, began to dance. The instant this occurred, I suddenly felt not merely an impression but a conviction that I had witnessed the whole scene, in every detail, on some former occasion. I had seen my long-cheeked Canadian friend, taking the match out of my hand and striking it, as he had just done, on the back of the dirty-looking chair by his side, the lean piper, the stout woman in red, the fluffy-haired little creature skipping about so nimbly with the tambourine, the throng of swarthy-faced spectators all around us, some leaning back in their seats, others leaning forward, their elbows on the tables and their chins in their hands ; and, over and above all, the great barn-like room itself, with its flickering, flaring gas-jets.

Not a single item in the scene was strange to me, and I was certain, positively certain, that I had been

present at it and borne my part in it before. I also knew that it was the little speech made by the fat woman, combined with her loud and abrupt beating on her gaudily coloured drum, that had given me the clue and brought it all back to me.

For a few seconds the extraordinary nature of the phenomenon almost dazed me, it seemed so absolutely inexplicable, and then, before I could stop myself, I had blurted it all out to my apparently material and hard-headed companions.

"I know," I added, "that I must appear to be either mad or drunk, but you can, I think, be witnesses yourselves to the fact that I am not drunk, and I can assure you I am not more mad than usual. Tell me, have either of you ever heard of anyone else experiencing the same sensation?"

Then, to my astonishment, my utter unfeigned amazement, the schoolmaster from Cape Town, who had impressed me as being one of the most normal and unimaginative creatures in the universe, said quite seriously:

"If you wish to know, I have myself had that sensation, and not so very long ago. It was in a village seven or eight miles from where I live, on one of those sunshiny mornings typical of South Africa at that time of year. I was standing in the cemetery, bareheaded, listening to those around singing *Abide with Me*. Suddenly the music ceased, the parson in solemn and measured tones pronounced the words 'Earth to earth, dust to dust,' and the coffin slowly sank from view in the black gaping hole in front of me. Just as it was disappearing a bird in a tree near at

hand twittered, and someone sneezed, and instantly, like a flash of lightning, the realisation came over me that everything that had occurred, down to the twittering and sneezing, had happened in precisely the same order and manner long, long ago."

The schoolmaster finished, and I was fully expecting to hear an emphatic "Bosh!" from the Canadian, who seemed, if possible, even more matter-of-fact and normal than the man from Cape Town, when, to my utter surprise, he said:

"You needn't flatter yourselves that you're the only two who have had that experience, because I've had it. Listen. Seven years ago last fall, as I was standing on the deck of the *San Salvador*, a South American steamer, after she had been run into by the *Thremjohn*, a Norwegian timber ship, waiting somewhat anxiously to be taken off in the boats, a parrot that one of the passengers had insisted on bringing with her suddenly shrieked out from the great black void beneath, 'Gee! ain't we all lively.' That did it, just those few silly words. Back it all came to me in a trice, and I was positively certain that the whole scene, consisting, as it did, of the stamping, rushing crew, the boats, with their muffled-up, white-faced cargoes, going down slowly from the davits, the dark figure of the captain bawling out his orders on the bridge, the rising and falling lights of the *Thremjohn*, the occasional flicker of moonbeams on the heaving, tossing waters, and the spray on my cheeks and in my nostrils had all been enacted before, and this was but a repetition. It was darned queer, and there can be no other explanation than that the

whole had happened, at least once before, in a previous existence."

"Perhaps," the schoolmaster commented, "it is purely mental, or, shall I say, physical. Part of the mind, the part some people style the subconscious mind, is sometimes the recipient of an impression, the barest fraction of time, before it reaches the other part. What the conditions are that determine this happening we do not at present know. Don't you think this is feasible?"

"Feasible, yes," I remarked, "but I think the suggestion made by our Canadian friend here is also deserving of consideration. We may have had an actual and former experience of everything we are now experiencing, the repetition being inflicted on us, possibly, by way of punishment; but, of course, one might go on speculating for ever."

"And pigs might fly," the Canadian grunted. "Let us change the subject," and we did.

I went out West via Chicago, Denver, Omaha and San Francisco. One day, while we were travelling between Chicago and Omaha, I had a chat with one of the black conductors on the subject of ghosts. It was a subject that he had evidently thought much about, for, after he had been listening intently to what I had to say for some minutes, he suddenly remarked:

"If you promise you not say a word about it to anyone, I tell you someting about dis train dat will interest you." I promised, and he replied: "Very well, den. One of de berths is haunted. I have seen a ghost in it myself, and it gave me some fright, sure. It happened like dis. I was walking through de

sleeping quarters one afternoon, looking everywhere for someting I had lost, when I suddenly see a head lying on de pillow of one of de berths, and when I look closer still I see de face too. It was de face of a man with very white cheeks, a black beard, and red mark just over one of his eyebrows. I sez to him: 'You have come to bed too early, sah; you must get up. It's against the regulations.' He made no reply, and on my repeating de remark with de same result, I put out my hand to shake him. To my horror and surprise I touched noting, only de air; der was no one der. Den I got in a panic and ran, ran right out of de compartment into another. Two hours later a man came on board de train for de first time and I gave a mighty start. He was de living image of de face I had seen in de berth. De same white cheeks, de same black beard, de same red scar. It was all exact. Well, dat evening dis stranger, he jumped out of de train, in a fit of madness, it was reckoned, and so hurt himself dat he died. Now what was dat I saw? sure it was his ghost, sah, was it not?"

"It certainly seems as if it was," I replied, "though why it should appear to you I don't know."

"No, dat beats me too," the conductor replied. "If you come along wid me, I show you de very place where it happened."

I went with him, and he took me to one of the sleeping compartments, and pointing to a berth said:

"Der now, sah, dat is de very one." He was about to add something further, when his jaws dropped and his eyes looked as if they would bulge out on to his cheeks.

"Why, what on earth's the matter?" I ejaculated, not a little startled at the sudden change in him.

"Do you see dat, sah?" he whispered, clutching hold of me by the arm, "dat black shadder on de pillow. It is in de shape of a coffin. Someone on dis train is going to die soon; I know dey are."

I looked, and certainly did see a shadow where he indicated, but to me it looked perfectly shapeless and vague.

Several hours later, however, while we were stopping at a depot, my black friend came to me in a great state of excitement.

"Der, didn't I tell you, sah," he said, "someone on de train was going to die. It was one of de passengers, an old gentleman from Baltimore, and he has just passed away in a fit. Dat shadder spoke de truth; I knew it did."

What he said I found to be quite correct. One of the passengers had been suddenly taken very ill, and had died before he could be got out of the train. This incident left me wondering whether the black conductor would have seen these two phenomena—the man's face and the shadow of the coffin—anywhere, or whether that particular berth was haunted, as he apparently seemed to think.

At Omaha I had a queer experience on St John's Eve. There are certain nights in the year—to name several, All-Hallows E'en, St Mark's Eve, and St John's or Midsummer Eve—when the spirits of the dead and other spirits are generally supposed to be in very close touch with this earth; and on these particular nights the performance of certain ceremonies and the

repetition of certain words, at or about midnight, and under conditions of stillness and solitude, is believed to have the effect of inducing these spirits to reveal themselves. I have tested this superstition many times, and have satisfied myself that there is more than a little truth in it. Well, it so happened that I arrived at Omaha on 22nd June, and finding several people in the hotel, where I put up, greatly interested in the subject of the Supernatural, I proposed doing some old-world spells on Midsummer Eve. The proposition met with instant approval, and the evening in question found some of us grouped together, in eager anticipation.

We commenced at about half-past ten o'clock with the boiling lead superstition. It is done thus:—You place a big tub full of warm water on the hearth before the fire. Then, in turn, you melt some lead in an iron spoon on the fire and sprinkle it over the water, and if there is any message for you from THE OTHER SIDE, it is supposed to denote itself in the shape some of the lead assumes. In only one instance on this particular night did any of the sprinkled lead take a definite form. It was in the case of a girl named Winnie Jones. When she came to examine the bits of lead that lay at the bottom of the tub, she uttered a loud exclamation of surprise and alarm. One of them was in the exact semblance of a death's head. We pretended to laugh, of course, though I could see trouble and dismay writ on several of the faces present.

“Let's try the hempseed next,” someone suggested, and, greatly relieved, we all made a move towards the door leading to the hotel garden. The hempseed spell

is performed as follows :—You take as much hempseed as you can hold in one hand, and in the other hand, an ordinary garden hoe. Then you go out of doors, preferably into some very still, deserted garden, and all alone, of course, walk steadily ahead, scattering the hempseed in front of you, and at the same time covering it over with the hoe and repeating the words :

“ Hempseed I sow, yes, hempseed I hoe.

Oh, thou who’st to wed me come after me and mow.”

The belief is that if you look round, while you are doing all this, over YOUR LEFT SHOULDER, you will see him or her whom you will marry coming after you. Should you be destined never to marry, you will, of course, see nothing, and if death should be your doom within the forthcoming twelve months, then what you will behold will be something extremely unpleasant. Well, after a time we were all ready for the performance. It was nearing midnight, and outside all was absolutely still, saving for fitful gusts of wind that made the branches of some tall trees near at hand shake and rustle with, what seemed to us at that hour, singular mournfulness.

“ Gee ! ” one of the girls ejaculated, with a half-nervous, half-excited little laugh. “ Have we got to go out all alone ? How thrilling ! ” She then took a handful of hempseed and the hoe, and went, and, on her return, the others, one by one, followed suit. Nothing happened till it came to Winnie Jones’s turn. I felt then that something would occur, and such, indeed, was the case. She had hardly been gone a

minute before we heard her give a terrified scream and, on running out to see what was the matter, we found her lying on the path in a dead faint. On her recovery she told us that, when she looked round over her shoulder, she had seen a tall hooded figure, all in black, with a skeleton face, coming after her. She was so upset that it was some time before we could go on with the spells, but we did so eventually, and it was my turn next to have a somewhat startling experience. One of the "spells" for this particular night is that of standing in front of a looking-glass, combing your hair, and at the same time eating an apple. You must, of course, be alone, and the room must be without any artificial light. Granted these conditions are observed and the powers on the Other Side are willing, what Fate has in store for you within the coming year will be revealed. When it came to my turn to work this spell I candidly did not expect to see anything, for I had often tried the experiment before, and never with even the slightest degree of success. On this occasion, however, I had scarcely begun to eat the apple, when the mirror suddenly went black, and out of the darkness appeared the most vivid picture of a hand, holding a black-edged envelope. The envelope was addressed to me in writing I seemed to know, and I noticed that the postmark was Dublin. I had just observed this, when the picture faded away, and the glass went black again.

That finished me. A grey-haired veteran from St Louis took my place, and when he joined us in the passage some few minutes later there wasn't a particle of colour in his cheeks.

"Have you seen anything?" a pretty, dark-eyed girl from San Francisco—all San Francisco girls are pretty—asked.

The veteran nodded.

"Yupp," he said, "what looked like a lot of earth falling. I reckon something unpleasant will happen to me before long."

He reckoned right, for the very next week I got a letter saying he was dead. He had died of heart disease in a friend's house in Omaha.

With regard to my own experience, I learned shortly afterwards that a great friend of mine in Dublin was dead. That confirmed two of the prophetic visions seen that night. Whether anything happened that could be associated with the third—*i.e.* the hooded figure—I cannot say, for I could glean no news at all of Winnie Jones after I left Omaha.

About this time several reputed hauntings in America were attracting considerable attention. One was at Newburyport, where it was alleged the ghost of a little boy was to be constantly seen looking through a school window, greatly to the alarm of the pupils. Another, at Lansingburg, where a lady of the name of Clementine Pitt was continually haunted by the sound of footsteps, a voice, and a grim shadow. Another was associated with the Syracuse and Binghampton Railway, the driver and fireman of one of the engines on that line complaining that always, when they neared Marathon, they were joined by the phantom of a woman, who used to touch them on the cheek and neck with icy hands and

whisper: "Now I've got you, and one day I will throw you into the water." Whilst a fourth, relating to a tramp, was taking place at Denver.

Now, unfortunately, I was unable to investigate the first three mentioned of these hauntings, owing to the distance that lay between them and the places I touched at on my route; but, with regard to the fourth, I was able to gain some information from a practical experience of it, since Denver was one of the cities at which we were stopping for several days. The history of this haunting is as follows:—

One day on the road to Denver City, near the Zoological Gardens, a tramp was found dead, and ever since, according to report, his headless ghost had been seen hovering around the spot where his body had been found. Well, on hearing the details of this story, I determined to visit the spot said to be haunted, and, accordingly, set out one night, alone, about eleven o'clock.

I did not take a car. After about an hour's walk I found the spot that had been described to me. It was close beside a pile of stones, out of sight of any human habitation. Seating myself on the pile of stones and breathing in the pure air from the distant desert and mountains, I waited hour after hour, till my patience at length became exhausted, and I rose and started off homewards. I hadn't gone more than a dozen or so yards, however, before I heard a loud cough, apparently from just behind me. I at once turned round, but there was no one there. The night was lovely—overhead a great white moon in an absolutely cloudless sky, decked everywhere with scintillating stars; below,

in the far distance, snow-capped mountains; and on either side of me, flat, open land. No one was in sight, and nowhere could I see any living creature; but I had not been conscious of any feeling of isolation until I heard that cough, and then, as I swung round and stared about me, I experienced a strong, an overwhelmingly strong, sensation of loneliness, that almost amounted to a conviction that I was completely cut off from the rest of humanity. But the cough—whose it was and where it had come from I could not think; and convinced at last that I must have heard it only in imagination, as there was no sign of anyone anywhere, and no place in which anyone could possibly have hidden, I went on again. And then, for the first time, I became conscious of my own footsteps. In the utter stillness, which at that hour reigned supreme, they sounded unnaturally loud and distinct. And then, all at once, I heard other steps pattering at a measured tread behind me. Thinking that, after all, the cough must have been real, and that someone was dogging me, I abruptly swung round again. Behind me was a long vista of roadway, all gleaming white in the moonbeams, but I could discern nothing that could in any way account for the footsteps, that reason assured me could not have been my own. To make doubly sure that they were not my own I paced up and down, stamping my feet as I did so, and the echo was immediate and obvious.

Then I resumed my walk, noting carefully the echoes called forth, and presently the other footsteps became audible again. But now they varied. Sometimes they slackened, and came almost to a dead stop,

and sometimes they quickened to a run, continuing thus for some twenty or so strides, and then subsiding into an erratic walk again. As my own steps had been quite regular all the while, this variation in the others afforded yet another proof that they were in no way due to echo.

Again I halted and looked round, and again I saw nothing, only the whitest of moon-kissed roadways, flecked, here and there, with the black, flickering shadows of trees and shrubs. To test still further the apparent phenomenon, I now walked back fifty or so yards, but there were no pursuing footsteps, only the very apparent echo of my own.

I went on again, and there was no repetition of the phenomenon till I had come back to the spot which I had been told was haunted. Then I again heard a cough, just a single loud cough, full of vague unpleasantness, and, as before, coming from, seemingly, just behind me. I turned round at once, but there was nothing to be seen to account for it.

The sensation that some unknown presence, close at hand, was mocking me, now took complete possession of me, and in order to combat the horrible feeling of fear it called forth, and to which I was beginning to succumb, I made a pretence of being braver than I really was, and, halting, in the most composed voice I could assume, called out sternly: "Be off, whoever you are; you won't scare me."

The result, however, was one that I had neither anticipated nor desired, for the sound of my voice in that most profound solitude and stillness had in it something so indescribably alarming and exciting that

I yielded to a panic and ran, and to my unmitigated horror the mysterious footsteps ran too.

This state of things continued for about half-a-mile, when, suddenly, the pursuing steps ceased, and I realised, to my unbounded relief, that the thing, whatever it was, had left me. I got to my quarters without further adventure. When I narrated my experience to the hotel clerk, from whom I had learned the details of the haunting, he said :

“ That’s what generally happens—a cough first and then footsteps, just as you describe, though, usually, the figure I told you about is seen, too. Endless attempts have been made to lay the ghost, but they have ended, always, in failure.”

Well, I subsequently visited the spot twice, but on each occasion heard nothing. Whether the haunting still continues or not I cannot say, as no one I have questioned on the point seems to know.

Coughing ghosts would seem to have been somewhat common in Denver at that time, for I was told of two others in that city ; the one haunted a grocer’s store, and the other the corner of Race Street. The former would stand behind customers in the evening, as they were waiting to make purchases at the counter, and give a significant little cough in their ear, whilst the latter would startle pedestrians by emitting a series of very violent coughs close to them. Both hauntings were confined to one season of the year—namely, about the middle of the fall—and nothing was ever seen. So much for Denver.

In the forests *en route* for San Francisco I came across one, at least, interesting case of haunting. A

man called Weston, living at that time in Carson City, asked me if I would like to see a gully that bore a very evil reputation both for crime and ghosts, and on my acquiescing, took me there. We went part of the way by wagon and the remainder on horseback. The gully was in the Sierra Nevadas, about forty miles to the south-west of Carson City. When we were a little distance from it Weston bade me dismount.

"We'd better leave our horses here," he said, "or we shall have trouble. No horse ever goes through the gully without shying or bolting, generally both."

Having tethered the animals to a tree, he then pursued his way on foot along the forest track, and I followed close behind. It was about nine o'clock and the gloom was frightful. Enormous pines towered above us on either side, and consequently we caught, at long intervals, only the briefest glimpses of the serene and star-laden sky. After groping our way in the semi-darkness for some time we at length came to the brink of a very precipitous hill.

"There," Weston said, pointing to the descent in front of us, "the gully is down there. Mind how you walk and keep your eyes well skinned."

It was needless warning, for I was already thoroughly on the qui vive, and determined not to advance at any but a snail's pace. As I slowly descended into the ravine, I scanned the scene around me most attentively, and perceived, deep down in the gully, nothing but tree-tops, that did not stir, but stood absolutely still, apparently quite unaffected by the cool night breeze.

I mentioned this to Weston, remarking also on the

fact that no sound broke the measureless silence of the place, excepting the echo of our feet, and he then told me that so deep was the gully situated that even the terrific wind, which, at certain seasons of the year, swept with great force along the surface of the land we had lately been traversing, scarcely made itself felt in it. At last, after narrowly escaping sprained ankles and concussion owing to ruts and holes, low-hanging branches and other obstacles, that we could not see in the darkness, we eventually arrived at the bottom of the chasm, and just as we did so, the moonlight, suddenly becoming, so it seemed, more brilliant, revealed a scene that was wild and rugged to a degree. The track seemed to expand abruptly, and on either side of it I could discern the grotesquely fashioned trunks of trees, and between them large and misshapen masses of stone, all of which gleamed a startling white. A more ghostly and murderous-looking place I had never seen, nor, even in my wildest flights of imagination, conjectured.

“This is the gully,” Weston said, “and if we stay here a little, perhaps we may see or hear something. According to tradition either the Sioux or some other tribe of Indians used to offer up human sacrifices on one of these blocks of stones. That seemed to set the ball rolling, for after their time several white people, so it is said, committed suicide here, whilst not a few were murdered. I can vouch for one tragedy at least, because I knew the victim, a bright clever lad called Edward Hickson, whose parents owned a ranch some twelve or so miles away. He left home early one morning in the fall of the year to attend school, and

as a terrible storm came on, suddenly, soon afterwards, his mother, becoming anxious about him, sent a messenger to the schoolmaster to see if he had arrived safely. The reply came in the negative. Edward was not there, and no one had seen him. Much alarmed, the parents, accompanied by search-parties, set out to look for him, but they had little success, for the only traces they could find of him were a pair of blood-stained shoes and a handkerchief, undoubtedly his, close beside that rock over there," and Weston pointed to a great gleaming boulder, about a dozen yards from where we were standing. "No other clue was ever discovered, and to this day his fate has remained a profound secret."

"Do you think that the rock was a sacrificial stone?" I said.

Weston nodded.

"It is recorded so," he responded. "If you examine the top of it in daylight you can see a number of dark marks on it that are thought to be bloodstains, and a groove all round it that is supposed to have been made for catching the blood and allowing it to drain off. It is believed by the Indians to be haunted by a spirit that manifests its presence by making a peculiar sound like a long protracted sigh or shudder—— God, what's that!"

As he spoke I distinctly heard a sound, strangely like the sound he had just described, coming, so it seemed, from the rock. To me it suggested a horror and suffering quite beyond human ken. Indeed, in that absolutely still and lonely place the whole thing was appalling. I felt a thrill of real, ghastly fear run

through me. However, stepping right up to the rock, I applied my ear close to it, and presently the sound was repeated. This time it undoubtedly did come from the rock, of that there could be no question, and I searched all round it, to see if I could discover anything that would account for the phenomenon, but I found nothing.

“This is the first time I’ve experienced the haunting myself,” Weston said, when I rejoined him, “but dozens have told me that they’ve experienced it, and that, in their opinion, there is no satisfactory explanation, saving on the grounds of the Supernatural. For my own part, I feel convinced that the rock is really haunted by an evil spirit which periodically clamours for blood, and I believe it is this haunting that, to a large extent, is responsible for the many crimes and deeds of violence said to have taken place here. Let’s be going.”

I heartily seconded this proposal, thinking it unsafe from every point of view to remain, and as we were retracing our steps up the hill, I heard a faint sound coming from the gully we had left. It resembled a whoop, such as boys sometimes make, and I was about to comment on it to Weston, who had maintained a moody silence, when I heard it again.

“Did you hear those whoops?” I said to him, after a few minutes’ silence.

“Yes,” he replied, “and I believe that Edward Hickson’s ghost haunts this place, and is the author of them. Anyhow, no one has ever been able to discover a more satisfactory explanation of them.

You have had enough experience for one evening, eh ? ”

“ Yes,” I said. “ I shan’t be sorry when we get out of this.”

Nor was I, for never before had I visited—and I certainly never have since—a spot as weird and appalling as that gully.

My next ghostly experience was in San Francisco, and it happened when I was staying in an hotel in 117th Street.

Hearing that I was interested in ghosts, one of the visitors, called Lester, offered to introduce me to an attendant at a swimming-bath who, he said, could tell me something interesting. Well, I went to the baths with Mr Lester, and was introduced by him to a man, whom he called Hal.

“ So you want to hear of a haunting in this town, do you ? ” Hal exclaimed, after we had shaken hands. “ Well, I reckon you couldn’t have come to a better place, for there’s a ghost here that occasionally makes itself felt, without any doubt. Are you staying here for long ? ”

“ About three days,” I said.

“ Then come here the day after to-morrow about six P.M.,” Hal ejaculated, putting a plug of tobacco in his mouth, “ and I’ll then give you an opportunity for finding out what is wrong with the place. Only, mind you, you mustn’t go and blab about it to anyone, or let it get into the papers, as that won’t do, either for the boss, myself, or you ! ”

I promised to keep a discreet silence, and, after a chat, we parted.

Two days later, at the appointed time, I again went to the baths, and Hal said :

“Take a swim right round the bath, and tell me afterwards if you experience any queer sensation.”

Well, I undressed, dived in, and commenced making a complete tour of the bath, as he suggested. Nothing happened till I got to the deep end, when, suddenly, an icy chill ran through me, and I had a strong feeling something very horrible was directly beneath me. It so startled and shocked me, that I made at once for the nearest steps and quickly scrambled up them on to terra firma.

“Well,” Hal remarked, as I walked up to him, “did you feel anything ? ”

“Indeed I did,” I said, and I described to him the strange experience I had had, pointing to the exact spot where it had occurred.

“I reckoned it was there that you would get it,” he said ; “that is just where the haunting is. Some years ago, before I came here, a fellow was found lying dead at the bottom of the bath in that particular spot. It was given out that he had had a fit while bathing, and that he had gone under in consequence, but I believe there was always a bit of a doubt about it. Anyhow, from that time onward, those who have bathed here, over the spot where the body was found, have frequently complained of exactly the same sensation as you had ; whilst some, declaring that they had just struck, when diving, against a body lying at the bottom of the bath, have actually come and asked me to fetch it up. You won’t mind my asking you again not to let the papers know about it,

will you, because if it once got into print, there'd be no end of a talk, and it might do us a considerable amount of harm."

I promised, and, slipping on my clothes, left the baths with the firm determination never to swim in them again.

Some years afterwards, on making inquiries, I learned that they had been completely renovated, and that the phenomenon, whatever it was due to, had entirely ceased.

And now a few words with regard to Red Indians and ghosts. In my travels through California and Oregon I came across a great many Red Indians from the Rogue river and other settlements, and succeeded, by dint of bribery, in extracting from them certain of their beliefs and experiences, relative to the Unknown.

They told me, for instance, that tree hauntings were quite common in the Western American forests; that sometimes a tree would be haunted by the ghost of someone who had hanged himself on it, or who had been murdered near it; and sometimes, again, by an elemental, usually very grotesque and terrifying in appearance, and always maliciously disposed to humans. But more than this; they told me there were actually tree phantoms, and assured me they had seen them. They said these ghost trees were either very dark and shadowy in appearance, or else very vivid, when they seemed to be in a constant state of vibration and to omit a lurid glow from all over them. They had, as one might imagine, a terrible effect on horses, often either sending them

downright mad with fright, or else shattering their nerves to such an extent that, instead of being sound and reliable, as formerly, they became feeble, uncertain, and simply shied and bolted for nothing at all. The Red Indian also declared to me that certain phantom trees were very evil, more evil than any other kind of ghosts, and were often responsible not only for suicides and murders but for all sorts of diseases. I asked them if they thought these phenomena were the ghosts of actual trees, trees that had once lived, and they said not always, that sometimes elementals assumed the form of trees, just as they assumed the form of human beings and animals. They showed me a spot in a Californian forest they said was haunted by a tree ghost, and even though the sun was out at the time, I felt a something unpleasantly peculiar in the atmosphere, and was glad to get away from it.

On another occasion I learned from these natives of the Californian forests certain things with regard to wild animals. I was told by them, for instance, that bears were much more susceptible to ghostly influence than any other animal—more susceptible than dogs and horses—and that no bear would ever go near a place that was in the least degree haunted.

I asked them if they had ever seen the ghost of a wild animal, and their reply was that they had seen many, phantom bears and pumas being by no means uncommon, and that they had seen also, at certain seasons of the year, in the Oregon forests, round by Crater and Klamath lakes, the ghosts of coyotes and eagles.

Finally they volunteered the information that light, artificial light, was the only safeguard they knew of against ghosts, so that, whenever they slept in a haunted spot, they took care to keep a bright fire burning.

“But sometimes even that won’t keep them away,” they added. “Nothing will.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### MAINLY ON DOUBLES AND LONDON PARK GHOSTS

**A**FTER spending several months on a ranch in Oregon, to my utter undoing, for it proved anything but a financial success, I said good-bye to America and its ghosts, and returned to England on board the North German liner *Elbe*.

It makes me smile to hear the youth of to-day say how they roughed it going third-class to the States or Australia on British or American boats. They should, for once in their lives, fare as I did as a steerage passenger on the *Elbe*, and then—but not till then—they might perhaps talk about roughing it. Never shall I forget that passage home. For the whole first night or two the steerage passengers—men, women and children, and they numbered not a few—were herded together on the bare boards of the lower deck, without any sleeping accommodation whatever, whilst the ship's officers swore at them, and even kicked them, whenever they happened to get in their way. Fortunately for me, I succeeded in bribing an engineer to loan me his cabin, to share with a friend, also a steerage passenger; so that I slept really comfortably, though in every other respect I was no better off than the rest.

We were given what they termed three meals a

day, and both food and drink were doled out to us in tin dippers. For breakfast, tea without milk, and bread and margarine; for dinner, meat or soup, supplemented occasionally by a few prunes (which with the bread and margarine constituted the whole of my diet, for I tasted neither the meat nor soup; one glance at them was sufficient); and for our third and last meal, again milkless tea, and bread and margarine. During the intervals between these meals we were allowed short spells above deck, and but for these brief respites—respites from the agony of being boxed up, hour after hour, in a stifling atmosphere reeking of oil, and bad tobacco, and a hundred and one other smells inseparable from crowds of none too clean humans, many of them being constantly sick—I think I must have died.

All through those dreadful days, too, everything was on the same dead level of awful monotony—children continually screaming and squabbling, women scolding, and men growling and swearing, to a constant accompaniment of violent retching, as the ship rolled and pitched, from at least seventy per cent. of us all.

However, there did occur, occasionally, some incident to relieve the otherwise intolerable gloom of this inferno. For example, great amusement was caused once by a practical joke played on a Polish Jew by an over-humorous Irishman, named Patrick Murphy. The Jew had rendered himself extremely unpopular owing to a strange habit. He never seemed to leave off chewing during the day, and at night he was constantly heard by those around him, whom he

awakened by it, smacking his lips. At last someone, none too gently, asked him what he was up to, and he reluctantly admitted that he was hungry and was dining off a supply of ham and other food he had brought with him from his meat stores in Chicago. This confession, received with mingled anger and disgust, had the following result. The next morning but one, he rushed yelling and screaming up on deck, holding one hand to his throat, whilst with the other he thrust aside any seaman or steward who happened to be standing in his way, and accosted the first officer he met.

"Gott in Himmel!" he shrieked, "look, look, my throat has been cut! An Irishman did it. He drew the blade of his razor right across my windpipe. I bleed to death. Save me! I suffer terrible. Save me!"

"I can't see any blood," the officer grunted; "take your hand away."

The Jew timidly did as he was told, and immediately afterwards received a sound slap on the face.

"Be off at once!" the officer remarked sternly; "there's nothing the matter with your throat at all," and giving him another good cuff and a kick, he added, "and that's to teach you not to come to me again with such a cock-and-bull story."

On returning to the steerage quarters, his tail between his legs, so to speak, the Jew was greeted with roars of laughter, and he eventually realised that he had been the victim of an ingenious trick. Patrick Murphy, whom he hated, was the culprit. He had with one hand drawn the back of a razor

across his gullet, and with the other poured a tumbler full of tepid water down his neck, and this double action awaking him, and leading him, in his half-dazed condition, to conclude that he had been murdered (Murphy, of course, had taken good care that the Jew's eyes, when they opened, should alight upon the crimson-stained razor), the rest had followed as a matter of course. The Jew vowed he would take action against Murphy the moment the ship reached port, but whether he did so or not I do not know. However, thanks to Murphy—and this, to my mind, is all that matters—the Jew was completely cured of his offensive habit. This slightly humorous incident was followed, shortly afterwards, by a somewhat tragic one.

The night before we arrived at Southampton I was standing on the deck talking to one or two of my fellow-passengers, when a figure in uniform, whom I at once recognised as the captain, passed slowly by us to the taffrail and, leaning his elbows on it, gazed pensively into the black depths below.

“The skipper!” my companions ejaculated in unison. “I wonder what he is doing here!”

I wondered, too, and accosting a seaman, who knew a little English, I asked him.

“That can't be the captain,” he said (I am translating his speech into more readable English than he used), looking curiously at the figure, which was still standing in the same position; “the captain, I know, is engaged at this moment on the quarter-deck. But it certainly looks like him. I can't understand it.”

He left us as he spoke and walking up to the figure said something. The figure then turned round, and, without making any reply, or, apparently, even noticing the man, walked across the deck to one of the deck-houses and entered it. The seaman followed. A few moments later the latter rejoined us and said very solemnly :

“The figure you and I saw just now was not the captain at all, but his *Doppelgänger* (double). As you may have noticed, I followed it in there,” and he pointed to the deck-house, “and while I was looking at it, it vanished, melted right away into air. I wouldn’t have had it happen for worlds, for something bad will come of it, you may be sure.”

Well, something bad did happen, for on its next voyage out, the *Elbe* collided with a British ship in the North Sea, and sank with great loss of life ; but whether this catastrophe was in any way connected with the ghostly incident, just narrated, it is impossible to say. The captain, I believe, was amongst the saved.

Referring again to the ghostly incident, the figure we took to be the captain might have been his projection, and if so, the case would come under the same category as those in a previous chapter, and the explanation would be that the captain had been thinking of being on the deck where we were, and had unconsciously projected his spirit self thither, the subsequent loss of his ship, of course, being merely a coincidence. This, I say, is a possible explanation, though I rather incline to the view expressed, or rather hinted at, by the German seaman—namely,

that the figure seen was a Doppelgänger or some denizen of Ghostland simulating to be the captain, for the specific purpose of warning those on board the *Elbe* of an impending disaster. There have been several such cases in history. According to Miss Strickland, the double of Queen Elizabeth was seen prior to the death of that monarch.

“As her mortal illness drew towards a close,” the historian writes, “the superstitious fears of her simple ladies were excited almost to mania, even to conjuring up a spectral apparition of the Queen, while she was yet alive. Lady Guilford, who was then in waiting on the Queen, leaving her in an almost breathless sleep in her privy chamber, went out to take a little air, and met her Majesty, as she thought, three or four chambers off. Alarmed at the thought of being discovered in the act of leaving the royal patient alone, she hurried forward in some trepidation, in order to excuse herself, when the apparition vanished away. She returned terrified to the chamber, but there lay the Queen in the lethargic slumber in which she left her.”

Soon afterwards the Queen died.

A similar story is told of Catherine the Great of Russia. Shelley is supposed to have seen himself before he died, while Aubrey,<sup>1</sup> the historian, says :

“The beautiful Lady Diana Rich, daughter to the Earl of Holland, as she was walking in her father’s garden at Kensington to take the air before dinner, about eleven o’clock, being then very well, met her own apparition, habit and everything, as in a looking-

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Miscellanies*.

glass. About a month after she died of smallpox. And it is said that her sister, the Lady Isabella Thynne, saw the likeness of herself, also, before she died. . . . A third sister, Mary, was married to the Earl of Breadalbane, and it has been recorded that she also, not long after her marriage, had some such warning of her approaching dissolution."

Other cases of a similar nature have been recorded from time to time by various chroniclers, and I, myself, had an experience with what I believe to have been a prophetic ghost soon after my arrival in England.

I was in London lodging in a house in the then none too savoury Waterloo Road. Going upstairs to my bedroom one morning, I met what I took to be a fellow-lodger, called Ramsey, coming down, and I moved aside to let him pass. Thinking no more of the incident, I was continuing the ascent, when, to my astonishment, who should suddenly appear again before me on the stairs, and in the act of coming down, too, but Ramsey.

"Why, hallo!" I said, rubbing my eyes, to make sure it was not an hallucination. "How is this? You passed me going down only a few seconds ago."

"I didn't, as you can see," Ramsey said, looking very white and scared. "But are you sure it was I? Because, if so, it means that something serious will happen to me. Whenever a double is seen of anyone in our family the original is sure to die shortly."

Of course I told him not to worry, that very possibly I was mistaken, but, all the same, he did die, exactly three weeks afterwards.

In the north of England phantasms of this kind go by the name of swarths and waffs; in various other parts of the British Isles they are called fetches.

The owner of a small restaurant in the York Road, Lambeth, once had an experience, he told me, with a swarth near Carlisle.

"I was standing at the gate of my old home one evening," he said, "with my sister Gertie and her young man, Alfred Betts. We were waiting, as we often did, for the eight-o'clock post. Suddenly one of the farm dogs—my dad kept a farm—started barking, and a cyclist hove in view round the bend of the road leading to the village. Something about him seemed strangely familiar to me, and when he drew nearer I got a regular start, for he was the exact counterpart of Alfred Betts. When I say exact counterpart, I don't mean only in appearance, but in clothes as well—the same grey tight-fitting knickerbocker suit, such as cyclists often wore in those days, the same grey pork-pie hat to match, the same everything. Well, I was too taken aback with the strangeness of the likeness to speak, and Gertie was the first to make any comments.

" ' Alf,' she exclaimed, looking quite scared, ' that's your double ! ' "

" ' It's more than that,' Alf said solemnly, ' it's my swarth. You may take it from me I shan't live to make old bones.' "

"And no more he did," my friend, the restaurant-keeper, added, "for he was drowned next day while bathing in the river. You never see a swarth, saving before a death."

About the same time I heard of a similar case occurring in the Green Park. I was in there one evening, talking to a policeman, and the subject as usual turned on ghosts.

“Have you ever heard of one being seen here?” I asked, after he had told me one or two ghostly experiences he had had in his youth.

“Yes,” he said, “several. Look ’ere”—the police constables, by the way, in those days were not quite so particular with regard to their “h’s” as they would appear to be now—“’ave you ever ’eard tell of a person seeing themselves? You ’ave! Well, so ’ave I, and in this park, too. Listen. One ’ot summer evening, just two years ago, I was walking through this park in company with a pal, another constable, and we ’ad just come off duty and were going ’ome, mighty glad, I can assure you. Well, as we were a-’urrying along, smoking and talking, we sees suddenly wot looks like a policeman a-coming towards us. There being nothing unusual in that, we thought nothing of it, not until ’e was close to us, when we saw ’e was dripping wet, just as if ’e ’ad fallen in the water. We were about to call out and ask ’im ’ow ’e got in such a state, when we caught sight of ’is face—’e ’ad kept it turned from us afore—and then, we was what you might call spellbound, for, as sure as I am standin’ ’ere, ’e was the living image of my pal, and what’s more, ’e ’ad the same number on ’is ’elmet. On ’e came at the usual regerlation stride, and, as ’e drew close to us, ’e give my pal a look as I ’ave never forgot, it was so strange and hearnest. But ’e said nothing, and we didn’t neither, till ’e’d passed, and then, when we

both turned round to 'ave another look at 'im, 'e 'ad vanished. 'E'd 'ad no time to 'ide—besides, there was no place as 'e could possibly 'ave 'idden in—and yet 'e was nowhere to be seen. Up to then I 'ad felt pretty well all right, mind you, but the moment this 'appened a funny sensation come over me, and I felt queer—queer because I realised that what we'd both just seed was nothin' 'uman at all, but a ghost.

“ ‘ Well, Bob,’ I sez, ‘ what do you make of it ? ’

“ ‘ It was my swarth,’ Bob replied (‘e come from near Sheffield; hup there they call them swarths), ‘ and you may take it from me, mate, I’m not long for this world.’

“ Now I comes to what yer might say was the sequel. Hafter we seed the ‘ swarth,’ Bob was drowned, a-tryin’ to rescue a woman as ‘ ad thrown ‘ erself into the Thames.”

I have many more cases of this sort recorded in my notebooks, but as I have not an unlimited space at my command, I cannot reproduce them here. I can comment only briefly on those I have given, and pass on. Doubles afford an extensive field for speculation. They are a peculiar kind of phenomenon, and, in my opinion, they need not be confused with projection, because, whereas the latter are not usually significant of anything, doubles, invariably, seem to be prophetic, portending something that is going to happen in the future, though that something is not always in the nature of a death. I think, indeed, that doubles and projections are two quite distinct entities, and belong to entirely different categories. Projections undoubtedly emanate from within one; they are simply

part of man's complex organism, and, perhaps, do not warrant the term supernatural.

Doubles, on the contrary, are, I feel sure, something quite apart from man. They hail, so it seems to me, from an entirely separate and distinct superphysical world, and belong, perhaps, to the same order of spirits as family and national ghosts. More I cannot say.

To return to the London parks: they have always exercised a strong fascination for me. I first got to know them on my return from America—that is to say, in the nineties of the last century—and in those days they were very different from what they are now. To begin with, they formed the regular nocturnal rendezvous for trampdom. If you wanted to know where Billy Bluenose, three-button 'Erbert, or Moll Bleareyes were, you had only to scour one or other of the London parks at night, and you'd be pretty sure to find them.

They usually wandered in about nine, sat on the benches till eleven, and then lay, well concealed, in some remote spot under the trees, till morning. The police were, of course, supposed to find and drive them out, but the average police constable, being an amiable, good-hearted chap—there were no lynx-eyed, anti-man, petticoated police in those days—allowed them to remain unmolested, and often even added to their comfort by giving them a few cigarettes or coppers.

Hence they naturally preferred the parks, where they could lie, undisturbed, all through the night, to the arches and doorsteps, where they were liable to be moved on at any moment; and they also chose

them because they were central, "right in the swim of things," as they used pathetically to tell me.

But their sufferings were often indescribable. Had it been possible, the trees and bushes would have echoed and re-echoed with the groans of the poor wretches lying under them, suffering not only from hunger, and thirst, and cold, but from all manner of diseases, cancer and consumption included. As everyone knows, the ordinary person finds it hard enough to bear pain when surrounded with all the comforts of a home or hospital, but imagine what it must be like when you have none of these comforts, but are lying out-of-doors on the cold, damp ground, with nothing on you but a few rags. Could any hell be worse? I think not. And yet it went on every night; and though millions knew of it, none but the very few ever made the slightest effort to perform the rôle of good Samaritan. The Pekinese and King Charles were always sure of sympathy, even for the slightest pain; but the poor tramp in the most excruciating agony might groan and shriek, till he had no strength left to shriek any more, and yet none heard, none pitied him.

"What a waste of chances," some might exclaim, and, perhaps, be right, for I shall never forget an old tramp in Hyde Park, whose somewhat saintly face first attracted my notice, and to whom I gave a few pence, saying to me:

"You'll do well, my lad"—I was only a lad in those days—"to give to folk like us, whenever you can, because you never know but that a few rags and tatters may conceal the Christ."

But I thought, perhaps, more of his words than I should have otherwise, because they seemed to corroborate a theory I had even in those early days formed—namely, that everyone we see out-of-doors, perambulating the streets, is not of flesh and blood.

Among them there may be, and I believe often is, the actual Christ, offering us a chance to do good, a chance which, alas, we either cannot or will not see. And then, again, there are the evil spirits, perhaps the earthbound dead, perhaps elementals; they are all around us—in Piccadilly, Chelsea, Hampstead; in buses, railway carriages, cinemas—they sit next us, rub shoulders with us, vamp us, and impart to our only too receptive minds cruel and debasing ideas. And then, also, there may be some milder, better spirits, temporarily drawn back to the scene of their former haunts, to mingle once more in the throng and imagine themselves alive; and, lastly, there are undoubtedly very many phantasms of the living, the immaterial selves of people who have either consciously or unconsciously projected themselves.

All these, I repeat, may well form part of a London crowd. The parks, as I have already said, I found intensely interesting. Not only did they afford me much food for thought in the realm of human psychology, but they furnished me with heaps of new material for my research work regarding the Unknown. I not only came across many tramps—men and women—who had experienced ghostly phenomena in the parks, but I experienced several hauntings there myself.

One of these, which I will now narrate, occurred

in the vicinity of Knightsbridge. It was a wet night, and as I turned into the park I could see no one; it seemed absolutely deserted. To my astonishment, however, I suddenly perceived coming towards me a man in evening clothes; he was wearing an opera-hat, stuck jauntily on one side of his head, but, despite the rain, which was coming down heavily, he was without an overcoat or umbrella. As he drew nearer, and came within the rays of a flickering lamp light, I noticed that his face was perfectly white, and that there was a half-frightened, half-resolute expression in his light eyes, and lines of pain and suffering about his mouth, the corners of which were slightly drawn down. He was quite young—at the most, I thought, not more than five or six and twenty. My first thoughts were that he was drunk, for who but a drunkard or a lunatic would be out-of-doors in such a costume on such a night, but the steadiness of his gait and his general appearance soon made me think otherwise. There was something about him that fascinated as well as interested me, and, as he passed me by, without, apparently, noticing me, I turned round and, impelled by a sudden, strange impulse, followed him. On and on I went, the rain beating in my face, and the sound of distant traffic in my ears. Presently the young man came to a path leading diagonally to the Serpentine.

He turned down it in feverish haste, and quite unable to resist I followed him. At every step I now took the silence and solitude of the park seemed to increase. Though I could still hear the rattle, rattle of buses, and constant jingle of hansom, these noises

sounded far off and remote, while there was a sense of loneliness and isolation in the air, which made it difficult for me to realise that I was still in the very heart of London, hemmed in on all sides by a sea of buildings and all the insignia of a vast, thickly populated city. We went on in this fashion, he stepping out with giant strides, his hands fiercely thrust in his trouser pockets and his head thrust slightly forward, and I trying my very utmost to keep the same distance behind him, till we came to an open space, where several pathways met. Here he paused a few moments, as if undecided which path to take, and then suddenly slipped over the railings on to the grass and made a bee-line for the Serpentine, which I now saw gleaming in the distance. Led on by something stronger than mere curiosity, I promptly followed.

On we went, he always maintaining the same distance ahead of me and walking with the same swinging stride, and I, ever in his wake, watching his every movement with increasing fascination and interest. Finally, he reached the bank of the Serpentine, and then, somehow, I lost sight of him. He seemed simply to amalgamate with the moonbeams, the rushes, and the water, and to fade right away. Convinced now that what I had seen was superphysical, I retraced my steps at once, and making for the south side of the park searched for some of the tramps I knew.

At last I found one, known to his comrades as "game-foot" Joe. He was sitting on a bench near Lancaster Gate, and wouldn't utter a syllable, not even a swear word, until I had handed him a cigarette. He then let off a few oaths, just, I suppose, by way of

expressing his views as to things in general, and, perhaps, the weather in particular, for he was soaked to the skin, after which he condescended to answer the question I put to him.

“Do I know anything about the bloke in hevenin’ dress as you seed disappear down by the Serpentine? Yes, I does. ’E’s the toff what drowned ’imself in the Serpentine a few years back. But ’e’s not the only one; crowds of the folk out ’ere puts an end to their-selves on these benches and under them there trees, and yer never sees hanything of it in the papers, because it only concerns tramps. Now, if a hearl shot ’imself——”

But not feeling in the mood to hear any of his usual diatribes against the aristocracy I cut him short with a few coppers and went home, to bed.

Another ghostly experience in Hyde Park furnishes a good illustration of my theory that crowds are not always composed entirely of human beings, but often contain a percentage of beings that are not human—that is to say, a percentage of superphysical entities from another world.

“If you are on the look-out for ghosts,” an old man called Caterpillar Ben said to me one evening, as we were sitting chatting on a bench, “you ’ave only to go to the island on a Saturday night and listen to the nigger speaking.”

“What do you mean?” I said.

“I mean,” Ben replied, helping himself lavishly to the tobacco I offered him, “leastways I refer to the ghost of an old woman who used to be hon the road. We nicknamed ’er ‘’Arriet of the Arches,’ because

she often used to sleep under one or t'other of the bridges, and 'er ghost 'as been seen by more than one of us a-standing in the crowd there, a-listening to that there nigger."

"How should I know her if I went there?" I said.

"You couldn't mistake 'er," Ben replied; "she's very tall and thin, and white-faced, and she's dressed hall in black. Besides, she carries a sack in one 'and, wot she kep' her hextra clothes in, in case she got a post hofferred 'er."

"You've seen her?"

"No, I 'aven't, but I can tell you them 'as 'ave," and he spun off the names of three of four well-known frequenters of the park.

Well, I got on the track of three of these people, and they all confirmed Ben's story, declaring that they had repeatedly seen the ghost of "'Arriet of the Arches" listening to the nigger; and although I never could see her on the island myself, I was convinced by the earnestness and unanimity of her former confrères that they spoke the truth, and that the spirit of the poor dead tramp did go there and manifest itself to them, perhaps, merely, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MORE PARK AND SOME COMMON HAUNTINGS

I NEED not recount, having already frequently done so in the past, the story of the old tree with the arm-shaped branch, that bore the reputation of tempting people to commit suicide, and has long since been cut down. It was not the only tree in Hyde Park that was haunted, however; there were several others, and there were one or two in the Green Park, and in Regent's Park as well.

"Do yer know why I never sleeps hunder that tree?" an old tramp once said to me, pointing to an isolated elm in Regent's Park; "it's because of the coughing."

"The coughing!" I ejaculated. "What do you mean?"

"Why," he said, "heveryone who tries to sleep under that blamed tree is kept awake all night by a perpetual 'ack, 'ack, 'ack. It sounds has if someone close to yer 'ad a chronic hastma."

"How do you account for it?" I asked.

The tramp shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't," he replied; "I can't, hany more than I can haccount for lots of things we tramps, as folks call us, see and 'ear at night-time, when we're on the road. But why don't yer come one night, an' see if you hexperience hanything yerself?"

It was a good idea, and I acted on it. Entering the park one very warm evening, shortly before closing time, I concealed myself behind the alleged haunted tree, and, closing my eyes, tried to sleep. At first I had no luck, but, after a while, when everything became frightfully hushed and still, I succeeded in dozing off, and my mind became for a time, at least so it seemed to me, an utter blank. Then, suddenly, I began to dream. I thought I was in the crowded pit of a theatre, waiting in eager anticipation for the show to begin. Presently, the orchestra commenced, the curtain drew up, and a tall, thin man in a queer, spangled costume, not unlike that of a clown, came on and began to dance. Round and round the stage he capered, performing all sorts of extraordinary and exaggerated evolutions, till, all of a sudden, something made him stop, and then he commenced coughing. It was in vain he tried to prevent himself; he couldn't; he had to go on coughing, till his body shook and quivered, and his pale face became scarlet; and while he was still at it, still trying desperately hard to stop, and still obliged to go on, I awoke, awoke to hear close beside me a cough—just one solitary cough, no more. I looked around me at once, but nothing was to be seen, saving the trees, and their shadows, and the moonlit sward. Feeling chilled—more chilled I think than the temperature in itself warranted—and not a little unnerved, I sprang to my feet and immediately made tracks for home.

The next time I saw my friend the tramp he greeted me with:

“ Well, guv'nor, 'ave yer slept under that tree ? ”

And when I told him that I had, without waiting to hear more he said at once :

“ Then yer dreamed about a theayter.”

Much astonished, I replied :

“ Yes, I did ; but however did you know ? ”

“ Oh, I knows,” he said, “ because everyone as sleeps there dreams about a theayter. They fancies themselves in one, a-watching a feller dancing, and when 'e starts a-coughing, they awakes, to 'ear a real or what happears to be a real coughing going on alongside 'em. Ain't that what 'appened to you ? ”

“ It was,” I said ; “ exactly. But what is the explanation ? ”

The tramp, however, could not tell me.

“ I dunno,” he said ; “ there's no hexplanation as I knows of. But look 'ere, I'll tell yer something that once 'appened to me, not under that tree, but the one over yonder. Do yer see ? ” and he pointed to a tall elm, some distance away from the one I had slept under. “ Listen. Some years before the war I 'ad a pal of the name of 'Enderson, Alf 'Enderson. I met 'im, when I took to the road, down in Cornwall, Camborne way. Cornwall is a bad place for people of our calling—too much psalm-singing and total habstinence. Folks what goes in for that sort of thing are always stingy. You'd as soon squeeze water out of a stone, as persuade 'em to part with a brown, at least to the likes of me.”

Here he stopped for a moment to loosen the string that served as a lace to one of his well-perforated and all but soleless boots. Then going on again, he said :

“ 'Enderson and me met outside a confectioner's

in Redruth. We were both starving, and the sight of so much food getting on our nerves, instead of in our stomichs, we up with a couple of stones and bashed 'oles in the winder. Before, 'owever, we could pinch anything, we was copped. Result, a week's 'ard. That's 'ow I come to meet Alf. And when we were let out, we took to the road again together. Though you mightn't believe it, Alf was a musician—a real hartist, if ever there was one. 'E 'ad a mouth orgin, and 'e played lovely—all kinds of airs, though 'is favourites, and mine, too, was, *'Ome, Sweet 'Ome*, and *Old Folks at 'Ome*. 'E played so feelingly, that I don't mind telling yer I couldn't 'elp sniffing sometimes. Well, 'e and me remained with one another all one summer and winter, and then some'ow we got separated, and I didn't meet 'im agen till I runs across 'im one afternoon in this 'ere park. That was on a Thursday before Good Friday. I was sitting on this 'ere very seat, when 'oo should come shuffling along, but 'Enderson. 'E was always very thin—most of us chaps on the road are; you can guess why, can't yer, guv'nor?—but this time 'e'd surpassed 'isself; he was nothing but a bag o' bones. I never saw anyone looking so far gone. 'I'm jist about sick of it,' 'e sez, seating 'isself by my side; 'not a bite of anything since yesterday at noon, when a feller in Covent Gawden gave me an apple and a piece of rice pudden. There's blooming well nothing doing on the road nowadays.' I agreed, and we then set to work and torked things over. Finally we arrived at this conclooision. We was to give ourselves another day of it, jist to see if anything better in the way of luck turned up, and, if it didn't, we was to go together

to the Thames Hembankment and drown ourselves. We felt it warn't so bad taking the last big step, so long as there'd be two of us. We slept that night under the harches in Covent Gawden, and after we'd 'ad a cup o' cawfee—the bloke that ran the stall jist outside the harches gave us the cawfee—we separated. We was to meet, I must tell yer, under that tree over yonder, the one I jist pointed out to you, at 'alf-past five in the afternoon, and when we was agreeing to do this, Alf says, ' Bill, I'll tell you what I'll do: if I've struck anything in the way of luck, I'll let yer know it by playing a bar or two of *The Cock of the North* on my old organ, but if it's no go I'll give yer *Old Folks at 'Ome, Lead, Kindly Light*, or something melancholy like that.'

"Well," my old friend went on, "we parted company. Alf, 'e turns off by the Tube Station and makes for 'Olborn, while I 'eads off in the direction of King Street. I 'ad no luck—I knew I shouldn't—only tuppence, which a woman all dressed up in furs gives me in Leicester Square. I couldn't git a sight of work anywhere. Feeling down and out, I turned at last into a cawfee tavern in a street at the back of Leicester Square, and 'ad a cup of cawfee and a bit of dry bread, 'ard as a brick. I was so dog-tired, guv'nor, that I went to sleep there and then, and when the boss, an Italian, woke me up, it was already close on six. Remembering my appointment with Alf—I wasn't likely to forget it, was I, guv'nor?—I 'urried off; but not being able to walk fast, it took me more than 'alf-an-'our to git to this 'ere park. Well, I'd got to where we are now, when I suddenly sees Alf a-sitting on the grass under that tree," and he again indicated with a

wave of his grimy forefinger the elm he had previously pointed out to me; “’e was kind of leanin’ forrard, and in the waning daylight, guv’nor, ’is face looked white as a sheet. I was about to call out to ’im, when ’e suddenly put ’is orgin to ’is mouth and started a-playing *Old Folks at ’Ome*. Now, although I was prepared fur it, fur I felt some’ow as ’e’d ’ave no better luck than I ’ad done, it come as a bit of a shock to ’ear what I knowed was my death-warrant, accordin’ to what we ’ad agreed. Well, bein’ resolved to stand by my word and die with ’im, fur I was ’eartily sick of life, properly fed up with it, I made straight for the tree, and right down surprised I were, when I got up to it, to find that Alf ’Enderson ’ad vanished—melted, as yer might say—into thin air. I saw ’im, mind you, one moment, and the next ’e ’ad gone. Thinking it was jist possible ’e might ’ave got away some’ow without my noticin’, though I didn’t see very well ’ow it could ’ave ’appened, considerin’ as I’d ’ad my eyes on ’im all the time, I looked around—peeped be’ind every seat as was near. But ’e was nowhere to be seen. Blimey, ’e ’ad disappeared as completely as if the hearth ’ad opened right up and swallowed ’im.

“As yer may guess, I was real flummoxed—I couldn’t account for it nohow. I was feelin’ very queer, too, so I sat down; but I ’ad ’ardly sat a minute before someone touched me on the shoulder. It was a copper. ‘Now then,’ says ’e, ‘it’s time for you to be a-movin’ on. It’s against the regerlations of this ’ere park, you know, to remain hin it after locking-up time, and we don’t want no more suicides.’

“ ‘More suicides,’ sez I. ‘Why, ’ave there been any lately?’ ”

“ ‘Lately,’ ’e answers, with a kinder laugh—you know the way coppers ’ave of laughin’ at times— ‘there was one this afternoon, not more than an ’our and ’alf ago, if as long as that. A down-on-’is-luck bloke like yerself was found under that tree’—he pointed to the elm— ‘with ’is throat cut; it was with a broken bit of glass.’ ”

“ ‘Did yer see ’im do it, Sarjint?’ sez I.

“ ‘No bloomin’ fear,’ the Sarjint replies, ‘though I came upon ’im soon after ’e ’ad done it.’ ”

“ ‘What was ’e like?’ sez I, a queer kind of apprehensive feeling a-running through me.

“ ‘Why,’ sez the Sarjint, a-smoothing down ’is uniform and a-stooping to pick hup a ’ole cigarette someone ’ad dropped, ‘as far as I can rekerlect, ’e was a long, lean chap, as looked as if ’e ’ad ’ad nothing in ’im for a week or more. ’E was a-lying on ’is back, a-staring right hup in the sky, and clenched in ’is left ’and was a mouth orgin.’ ”

“ ‘I knowed then, it was Alf ’Enderson.’ ”

Another public spot in London that is, periodically at all events, haunted is Clapham Common. There were many rumours afloat of ghostly happenings there at the time of the Steenie Morrison mystery, and among the numerous accounts of them given me was one narrated by an old Clapham cabman. He said that one night, a week before the crime, he was crossing the Common at about half-past twelve, and commenting to himself on the extraordinary stillness of everything, and on the fact that there was no sign of

any human being about, when he saw a light of a bluish colour, on the spot where the murdered man was afterwards found. Wondering what it could be, he walked towards it, and when he had covered a dozen or so yards, it faded out, but, a moment later, appeared again. It was at first very faint, then it suddenly burst into a flash, sufficiently strong to bathe everything immediately surrounding it in a lurid, ghastly glow, and, subsiding, receded into a gloom and darkness that was quite appalling. The cabman pulled himself together, however, and going right up to the spot, examined both it and the adjacent bushes, but he discovered nothing that in any way explained or accounted for the phenomenon.

This experience of his interested me very much, because similar lights were seen at Whinny Park by the Rev. Alexander Esplaine, parochial teacher in Monimail, after the murder of Mr Millie by his servant Henderson. The infamous woman poisoner Gottfried, also, saw lights frequently, both before and after the committal of various of her numerous crimes. What exactly they are no one, of course, can say, but I have always thought it not improbable that they are some species of semi-materialised elemental, peculiarly interested in deeds of violence, and sometimes even suggesting and promoting them.

But this is, as I have said, mere speculation. All the same, the cabman's account of his experience so fascinated me, that I visited the Common several nights in succession, and although I did not see anything that was unaccountable, I certainly heard something—namely, a curiously ominous noise, something betwixt

a cry and a wail, which seemed to me to be neither human nor animal, and to come from the exact spot where the body of the murdered man had been found. Now, although, I felt sure that it was a manifestation of the superphysical, in order to assure others, I thoroughly searched every adjacent spot that could possibly afford cover for anyone playing a trick, and, as I had anticipated, I found no one, and nothing that could in any way explain the occurrence.

Wimbledon Common has always had its eerie spots, to which must now be added the one where the remains of a dismembered woman were found last year.

Viewed in the daytime, this Common looks as little like being haunted as it is possible for any place to look, but if you were to go there alone in the dead of a November or December night, and stand or sit awhile beside the water there, you might think otherwise. When walking across it one evening, a tramp I met and chatted with told me that he preferred spending the night in any other spot.

“It ain’t because it’s colder or damper ’ere,” he said, “or because there ain’t no nooks to shelter in; it’s because it’s so damned ghostly. I’ve seen worse things ’ere, I tell you, than I’ve seen anywhere helse in Lunnon. What do yer think of this for an hexperience. One night, seven years ago come November—to speak more precise in 1888—time of the finding of the remains of a woman on the Thames Embankment, when they was a-building New Scotland Yard, and halso of the Jack the Ripper crimes—’ow one remembers these ’ere things, they seems to ’aunt one, like—I arrived on this ’ere Common from the country. Tired

was I, not 'alf. Why, damn it all, I was so exhausted I couldn't 'ardly put one bit of shoe-leather afore t'other, so, instead of goin' on to Lunnon and sleeping under the harches in Covent Garden, I lain out 'ere all night on the ground. Yer see I couldn't 'elp myself; I was so dog-tired, I 'ad to do it. Well, has I was a-staggering along the path, a-thinkin' where I should bivouwack, a woman suddenly passed me by and walked on a-'ead of me. It being a bit foggy I couldn't see 'er very distinctly, but she 'appened to be slim, of middling 'eight and dressed hall in black. Thinks I to myself 'What are yer?'—here the tramp, who was smoking, paused a moment to make signs to me with his dirty, skinny hands for more tobacco—" 'Not a laidy, for no laidy would be about alone at this time of the night; nor a servant, for no servant would be hallowed hout at such a hower. Then who or what the devil are yer?' I asks myself, and as I looked at her curiously, the hidea suddenly came to me to follow 'er and per'aps do 'er in."

"Not kill her?" I interrupted, glancing with horror at the tramp, and at the same time taking his measurements, for, you must remember, he and I were, as far as I could judge, pretty well alone on the Common, and it was night-time. However, as he was smaller than I, and did not appear to be particularly muscular, I felt somewhat reassured, and went on listening with assumed ease.

"Yes, kill 'er," he growled, "but only hif I couldn't git what she 'ad without 'er struggling or 'ollering. When one's down and out, guv'nor, one gets a bit reckless. That's what Howen—or Jones, as 'e was

called on the roads—was a-sufferin' from, when 'e knocked all the Marshall family on the 'ead near Uxbridge in 1870. I knew 'im well, and I don't believe 'e'd 'ave 'urt any of 'em, if 'e 'adn't bin starvin'. Hafter all, it's a life for a life, hain't it? And when one's stomach's 'ad nothin' in it for days, and is a-grippin' yer, yer doesn't always stop to think. Yer haets on the himpulse of the moment. Well, as I was a-sayin', the hidea of gettin' what the woman 'ad on 'er come to me, and I followed 'er. But what puzzled me was, she still kept a'ead of me, I couldn't catch her up, although she seemed to be walking slowly, and I was walkin' as fast as ever I could.

“Well, we went on like this, I cussing and swearing because I couldn't catch 'er up, and she walkin' quietly, without once seemin' to halter 'er pace, till 'er come to the water sudden,” and he pointed to the pond, which lay all still and ghostly in the soft moonlight. “She then stopped, right on the hedge of the bank, and I was a-laughing and chuckling to myself to think what a fool she was to come to such a spot, for there would be nothing easier than to knock 'er on the 'ead, and after I 'ad stripped 'er, to 'ide 'er body in the water, when suddenly, she turns round and shows 'er face. Gawd love yer, governor, as long as I lives I shall never forget it, never; for it weren't a proper face at all: nothing but a white surface without eyes, or nose, or mouth. No features in it whatsoever. 'Ow did I see it if the night was foggy? Why, because it giv' out a queer kind of light from all over it. I knew, then, that it was nothing 'uman. Mind yer, I 'ad never believed in ghosts before and had always scoffed

at such things—but now I was downright scared—and has I stood a-starin' at it, hunable to move, it vanished. After that I ran, 'ow I done it I dunno, for has I told yer I was dog-tired—but I ran like lightnin' and never slacked till I was well hout of sight of the pond, and a good mile, I reckon, from Wimbledon Common."

I thanked the man for his story, which he told with every indication of sincerity, and giving him a shilling, hastened off. A few days later, I returned, and stayed all night by the pond, but I neither saw nor heard anything of a ghostly nature.

A month later, however, I did have an experience there. I was pacing up and down a stretch of grass on the Common, trying to keep myself warm, when I heard what sounded like a series of loud groans coming from a slight hollow on one side of me. Thinking it was some unfortunate tramp, suffering, perhaps, from colic or some other very painful disease, I at once hastened to the spot, but to my surprise could see no one. Yet the groaning went on, and so close to me that it seemed to come from under my very nose. Loud, continuous groaning, as of someone in violent, body-racking pain. There being no trees and bushes near, nowhere where anyone could be lying hidden, I could only conclude that it was something superphysical, and with that conviction in my mind, I sought another spot on the Common, where I remained till early morning.

Blackheath and Hounslow Heath were other places I visited in those days, and both had uncanny as well as unsavoury reputations. Women of the unfortunate

class, as they used to be termed then, prowled about everywhere, and every footpath and roadway was beset with tramps. Many a night have I found the latter sitting all alone and forlorn on the Heath seats, or lying all huddled up under a bush, or in a hollow. But neither tramps nor prostitutes are to be found there now ; Blackheath is to-day almost, if not quite, as chaste and free from vagrancy as the sea-fronts at Bexhill and Frinton. And the same, perhaps, applies to all the great open spaces—the heaths, parks and commons—in and around London. Stricter police regulations and Watch Committees have at last purged these places at night of what is generally termed disreputable humanity ; and the flotsam and jetsam of this great city, some of it so picturesque in spite of its rags and tatters, has all gone—that is to say, it has all gone elsewhere. But, at night, in the parks and on the commons, we may still see trees and shadows—shadows to some of which we cannot always find material counterparts.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE HAUNTINGS OF THE THAMES EMBANKMENT AND SOME RECENT CASES

**I**F tragedies bring ghosts, Waterloo and Westminster bridges should be two of the worst haunted spots in London, for there are few others, if any, that have witnessed more suicides. And yet, it is rarely that one comes across anyone who has himself had a *bonâ-fide* experience there with the superphysical. I know of one story, however, that I can narrate here, since it has been told me as absolutely true, but, first of all, I must prelude it with a little adventure of my own.

One wet night, towards the end of the last century, when I was still in rooms in the York Road, Lambeth, I said good-bye to a friend in Adelphi and, coming down Villiers Street, crossed the tram-lines on to the Embankment. Besides being wet, the night was cold and dark, the streets were absolutely deserted, and the feebly flickering lamps seemed to cast strangely elongated shadows on the glistening pavements. As I walked hurriedly along in the direction of Waterloo Bridge, I glanced at the river. The tide was unusually high, and the water, which appeared to be almost on a level with the road, where the many lights from Waterloo Bridge fell on it, flashed and sparkled like

highly burnished silver ; but, elsewhere, outside the radius of the lamps, it rolled by all black and sullen and shadow-laden.

I had just arrived at Cleopatra's Needle, and was passing by it, when I suddenly heard a whistling. It seemed to come from the river side of me, and there was something so arrestive about it, that I at once stood still and listened. After a few seconds it was repeated—a low, soft, and wonderfully seductive whistling, that sounded this time almost in my ears. Determined to fathom the mystery and ascertain its origin, I descended the steps leading on to the little landing-stage or alcove behind Cleopatra's Needle, and searched everywhere. There was no one there, nothing but the shadows of the grim and silent sphinxes that looked extraordinarily ghostly and sinister in the semi-gloom. Again I heard the whistling ; it was softer and even more seductive than before, and now there was no atom of doubt but that it proceeded from the water. I immediately leaned over the wall and looked down, down into the sullen, gleaming depths gliding noiselessly by ; but I could see no one. After the lapse of a minute or so, the whistling was repeated, and I felt I must get as near to it as possible, lest any single note should escape me. With this intention, I was leaning farther and farther over the wall, when a hand suddenly caught hold of me from behind and jerked me swiftly to the ground. I turned angrily round and found myself face to face with a policeman.

“ Another second and you would have been over,” he said sternly. “ What were you trying to do—commit suicide ? ”

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"Why, no," I replied indignantly; "I was merely listening to someone whistling. It is quite the most extraordinary phenomenon I have ever experienced. I could see no one and the sounds seemed to come from the very bosom of the river."

The policeman was an elderly man, and as he stood watching me, in the full glow of the street lamp, I fancied I could detect a strange expression creep into his eyes.

"Look here," I said. "I'm neither mad nor drunk. I'm speaking the plain, simple truth. I unquestionably heard whistling, queer, unearthly whistling, that attracted me in an altogether inexplicable manner. Can you in any way account for it?"

"No," he replied, shaking his head, "I can't; but queer things do happen at times along this Embankment and on the bridges."

"You have had some experiences?" I hazarded.

"One or two," he said; "but it doesn't do to talk about them. Plenty of P.C.'s could tell strange stories, but it wouldn't gain them promotion in the force, and, on the contrary, it might lead to their dismissal, as they'd no longer be looked upon as quite sane."

"Well, I should very much like to hear your experiences," I remarked, "and if you'll tell me them I'll keep your secret, and take good care that no one at Headquarters gets to know of it."

He hesitated for a time, but by dint of much tact, and a little bribery, I at last persuaded him to comply with my request.

"One evening, some years ago," he began, "before

I joined the force, I was walking along the Embankment, feeling down and out. I'd come up from the country to look for a job, and as I'd looked in vain for some days, tramping the streets from morning to night, I was getting just about fed up. Well, when I got to this recess, where you heard the whistling, I stopped, something seemed to make me, and peered over the parapet into the water; and, as I did so, I heard a voice, which sounded like a girl's, it was so soft and musical, whispering in my ear: 'Jump in.' I started and turned round, but there was no one there, nothing but that lamp-post," and he pointed to the lamp-post near where we were standing, "and those shadows," and he pointed again to the shadows of the sphinxes. "Well, I moved on," he continued, "but I hadn't gone far, before I felt obliged to come back. I did so, and was leaning over the parapet, when I again heard the voice. 'Jump in, jump in,' it whispered, and there was something so alluring and persuasive in its tone that I felt I must do as it said. I then looked round, just to make sure that no one was about, and to my surprise and annoyance, for I thought the streets were empty, I saw a young man crossing the road towards me. He came and stood a few yards off, and every time I was about to take the plunge, I was obliged to draw back, because I saw him eyeing me. At last, losing all patience at being so persistently watched, I went up to him and asked him what he meant by continually looking at me—spying, I called it.

" 'I don't mean any harm,' the stranger said. 'It's only because I like company. I'm bent on

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committing suicide to-night, and as you seem to be inspired with the same idea, I thought we might as well go together. What do you say ? ' ' "

Here the policeman paused, to give time to an elderly gentleman in an opera-hat and evening clothes, who had evidently been doing himself not wisely but too well, to sway past us, and then, after blowing his nose with a noise that made the old boozier start, went on again.

" Now, when the idea of suicide came from a creature of flesh and blood like myself," he remarked, " it did not appear quite the same thing, and life suddenly became dear to me again ; so, shaking my head, I said : ' No, I've had enough of it for one night. I'll have a last look round for work to-morrow, and if I don't find any, you may count on seeing me here at one—one in the morning. Wait till then.' I held out a few coppers to him—exactly half of what I had in my pocket, and, taking them somewhat reluctantly I thought, he promised. We then parted. All the following day I sought for work, but with no better luck than before, and at one A.M., worn out in body and mind, I arrived here, where I found my friend of the previous night waiting for me.

" ' Hullo,' I said, by way of greeting. ' I see you've kept your word ! Well, I'm going to do it this time, right enough.'

" To my surprise the young man shook his head. ' Why, what's up ? ' I exclaimed angrily. ' You're surely not going to back out of it ! '

" ' No, it's not that,' he replied. ' Only, I took your money under false pretences.'

“ ‘You did what ? ’ I said, thinking he had gone balmy.

“ ‘I took your money under false pretences,’ he repeated. ‘I jumped in.’

“ ‘Jumped in ! ’ I echoed. “ ‘Why, you must be mad.’

“ ‘But he had vanished, completely vanished, and I found myself talking to nothing. That frightened me, and I fled—fled like the wind.’ ”

Here the policeman stopped and blew his nose again.

“ ‘So it was a ghost ? ’ ” I said. “ ‘And the stranger had actually committed suicide ? ’ ”

The policeman nodded.

“ ‘I supposed so,’ ” he said, “ ‘and it gave me such a turn I never ventured near the spot again, till a few months ago, when I had to, because it happened to come on my beat ; but I’ve not heard the voice since, and, pray to God, I never may.’ ”

“ ‘Amen to that,’ ” I remarked, and wishing him good luck and good-night I came away.

Strange stories were still afloat, when I lived in York Road, Lambeth, of hauntings in connection with the Rainham, Whitehall, Albert Bridge, and Jack the Ripper crimes, all of which, so far at least as the general public were concerned, had remained mysteries. It is a significant fact that not only did all these horrors take place about the same time—namely, within the period commencing in 1887 and ending in 1889—but that there were certain striking points of resemblance between them—the bodies in every case being atrociously mutilated and the victims

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(with only one exception) women of the unfortunate class.

Taking this into consideration, it has always seemed to me extremely probable that these crimes, one and all, were committed by the same person. The police thought, so it was said, that a certain doctor, long suspected of being on the border of insanity, whose family were held in great respect, owing to their philanthropic work in the East End, was the culprit, and it was rumoured that they were in the act of running him to earth, when he abruptly disappeared. At any rate, true it is that his dead body was found on 31st December 1889, floating on the Thames near Westminster Bridge, and whether it is a mere coincidence or not the fact remains that, after that date, there was a complete cessation of the Whitechapel and Thames murder and mutilation horrors. However, the murders had no sooner ceased than the hauntings, so I have reason to believe, began; and amongst the few apparently dependable accounts of them that I have collected are those of a coster in Whitechapel named Mullins, and a carpenter who was lodging, at the time I met him, over an old-clothes shop in the Waterloo Road.

Both these men used to dine in the public dining-room of the house I was lodging in, in York Road, and it was there that they told me of the hauntings they had experienced. The first—the coster's story—was as follows:—(As it is here told in the first person I must apologise for a very imperfect reproduction of the coster's language.)

“On the night of 1st October 1888,” he began,

"I was a-walkin' through Banbury Street, Spital-fields, on my way 'ome. It was about one o'clock, and the place seemed to be quite deserted. When, 'owever, I came to the spot where the body of the poor woman 'Stevens' 'ad been found on the ninth of the preceding month, I got a start, for a 'and suddenly caught me by the shoulder. Thinkin' it was a copper, I turned round to ask 'im what 'e was hup to, as I was hall right, and no blooming murderer, but, Gawd love me, there was no one there. Nothing whatsumever but the damned 'ouses opposite. Then I got scared and 'urried on as fast as my legs could carry me. Two nights later on, one in January and t'other in February of the very next year, I again felt that 'and, about the same time and in the same place, and I can tell yer, guv'nor, what is gospel—'eaps of others as lives there 'ave felt it too."

This I proved to be correct, for, on my visiting the unsavoury locality, and making inquiries, I was able, after much trouble, to ferret out from the chary and none too communicative inhabitants, information to the effect that both the ghostly hand as well as other phenomena—inexplicable lights and noises—were still periodically experienced.

The truth of the carpenter's story depends solely on his own evidence. However, from what I saw and heard of him, I believe he was both sincere and trustworthy.

"I was crossing Westminster Bridge," he said, "in the early hours of the morning of the 1st of January 1890, and I had got about half way over, when I felt someone barge into me. The impact of their body against mine was so distinct that I gave

vent to my annoyance by a none too polite exclamation. At the same time I looked sharply round—and, to my utter amazement, saw no one. No one was there saving a bobby, standing as still as a statue, at the Westminster end of the bridge. I now came to a dead stop, and while I was looking about me, trying to make out what had happened, I heard a loud splash, from below, just as if some heavy body had fallen into the river. I ran to the parapet and peered over, but, though the moonlight was full on the water, making it gleam and sparkle, nothing was to be seen. I felt convinced then that I had encountered something supernatural, and walked on, no little unnerved and shaken. The next night, and the night after, while I was crossing the bridge at about the same hour, I experienced the same happening in pretty well the same place, but though I have been there scores of times since, it has never occurred again.”

This was the carpenter’s story, told in a very frank, straightforward manner, and if it does not actually verify the rumoured statement that Jack the Ripper committed suicide off Westminster Bridge, on the 30th of December 1889, it at least appears to furnish some corroboration.

I now come to another stage in my career. I left York Road, took up teaching for a time (principally as games master), in various private schools, then studied for the stage at the Henry Neville Dramatic School in Oxford Street, going subsequently on tour, after which I took up scholastic work again, since an opening in that line presented itself, and I found that

it was only by availing myself of it and renouncing the stage that I could marry the girl to whom I was engaged. I, therefore, ran a small preparatory school of my own, in Cornwall, for some years, before I eventually settled down to write, and lecture, and investigate any cases of haunting to which I might have access.

During my sojourn in Cornwall, I experienced several cases of haunting, and will briefly refer to one of them.

It occurred in quite a new house. Indeed, as its prospective tenant I had watched it being built, and it stood close to a steep declivity, or precipice, overlooking a path leading to the seashore. The hauntings, which commenced soon after I first occupied the house, and when I had no one living with me, saving my old housekeeper, Mrs Bolitho, consisted of strange noises at night, doors opening and shutting, and footsteps ascending the stairs and walking up and down the passage outside my room. Not wanting to alarm Mrs Bolitho, I said nothing about it, but, all the same, she soon gave notice to leave, saying that although she was very sorry to have to give up the situation, she really must do so, as she couldn't live any longer in a house that was haunted. She could never sleep at all at night "for the noises," she declared, and pointing to some very old Irish antlers I had hanging in the hall she added: "It's them antlers, I know it's them, because, every time I pass them by, I can feel them watching me. They are unlucky, and you ought to get rid of them at once. Burn them."

I told her I could not do this as they were heir-looms, but she insisted that I should do so, in spite of all and everything, and because I would not, she left me at the earliest moment possible. After she had gone, a new housekeeper arrived, but she also complained of strange noises, and left me; and as one after another of the housekeepers I engaged stayed only a short time—complaining of the same thing and giving notice on the same plea—I was obliged in the end to give up my tenancy of the house.

And, needless to say, perhaps, my housekeepers were not the only people who experienced the disturbances, for, later on, when my school grew and I had a staff residing on the premises, several of my assistant masters heard the hauntings, too. On one or two occasions the phenomena took the form of loud bangings on the doors. For instance, I awoke one night, to hear curious footsteps come along the passage that ran parallel with my bed, and halt outside my door. There was, then, a very loud bang on one of the top panels of the door, and afterwards silence. Upon hearing the loud bang I went to the door immediately and looked out, but there was no one, and nothing unusual to be seen. The following day, in order to make sure that it was nothing material that had caused the disturbance, I sprinkled the passage, alternately, with flour and sand, and fixed a line of cotton, breast-high, across it, and that night the footsteps came again, and after them the bang, and yet nothing was disturbed: the cotton was unbroken, and the flour and sand showed no sign whatever of imprints. After I had left the house, two

separate people—that is to say, people who did not know one another—gave me accounts of certain phenomena they had seen on the site of the house, before it was built, and it is interesting to note that their accounts tallied.

They said, respectively, that when they were passing by the ground, on which the house was subsequently built, late at night, they saw a very tall figure with a small, round head suddenly rise from it, cross the path in front of them with a swaying motion, and vanish over the cliff; and that the impression they received, even before they saw it vanish over the cliff, was that it was something superphysical.

Now this account of theirs quite coincides with the suggestion made by one of my housekeepers, when she gave me her notice.

“When I am left alone downstairs, late at night,” she said, “I get the impression that something very fantastic and uncanny comes in from the outside, and goes up the staircase, two or three stairs at a time.”

Well, in my opinion, that something described by my housekeeper corresponds very minutely with the figure seen by the two people referred to above.

The house being new had no history, and the only reason I can give for its being haunted is that there was something on or about its site that attracted phenomena of the elemental order. Hauntings by that species of spirit are by no means uncommon between Penzance, which was not far off where I lived, and Land’s End.

With regard to more recent cases. One of the

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most interesting I have had to deal with concerns a notoriously haunted house in Somerset. The house, which is several centuries old and is built on the site of a still older one, has long borne the reputation for being periodically haunted. Indeed, a rumour asserts that it is the house in which and around which Wilkie Collins wrote one of his weirdest novels—namely, *The Woman in White*; but, apparently, the rumour is not well founded, since the house was continuously occupied by members of the family who own it, till about twenty-five years ago, when, a panic being caused by several of the then occupants declaring that they had seen two apparitions, one a very terrible one, in the early hours of the morning, a general exodus ensued, and the premises were speedily vacated. And ever since then, the place has remained tenantless.

Well, having obtained permission to visit the house, I spent a night there in company with a Bristol journalist, and at about two A.M. the dog we had with us gave signs of extreme uneasiness by whining and snarling. Shortly afterwards, we both saw, simultaneously, what looked like a pillar of light move across the room and vanish close to the window.

Believing it to be some kind of superphysical phenomenon I spoke to it, but I received no reply, and no sign, indeed, sufficient to warrant us in supposing that it was conscious of our presence. We stayed there a little longer, and, nothing further happening, we came away. Some time afterwards, I again went to the house, accompanied, on this occasion, by three Bristolians, and had, on the whole, an exciting and interesting experience.

Having searched the house thoroughly, to make sure no one was in hiding, we sat in what was termed the haunted room, which we entered from a long corridor, leading to the main staircase. Hour after hour passed, and nothing happening beyond the continuous jarring of windows and whistling of the wind, for the night was very wet and stormy, we were beginning to get weary, when the front-door bell suddenly rang violently. Going down in a body—for it was close on one o'clock, and we had no idea who such a late visitor could be—we opened the door cautiously, only to discover, to our relief, that it was a friend, whose enthusiasm to see a ghost was such that, despite the weather, he had walked from Bristol, a distance of some eight or nine miles. He was, however, a profound sceptic in matters psychic, so we put him by himself at the end of the corridor, near the top of the stairs, and then returned to the haunted room, to resume our vigil. Presently the silence was broken by loud cries for help, and, on running to see what was the matter, we found our friend in anything but an enviable state of mind. He said that he had fallen asleep and dreamed that a tall figure, with a dreadful face, had come leaping up the staircase and, bounding past him, had gone into our room.

Now this was interesting, inasmuch as the description our sceptic friend gave of this figure he had seen in his dream tallied exactly with the description given me by the owner of the property of one of the ghosts that he himself had seen. Well, going back once more to the haunted room we sat down, and nothing further occurred, till about four A.M., when

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one of our party sat up and said : “ Look here, I’m so bored, I’m going.” He had no sooner uttered these words, however, before he cried out : “ Oh, my God, there it is ! ” and fell back in his seat with a gasp.

I asked him what it was, but he was too upset to speak. I myself saw nothing but a red rectangular light about six or seven feet from the ground. Supposing this to be a superphysical presence I spoke to it, asking it, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, what it was, and whether there was anything we could do for it. There was no reply. Someone then called out : “ It’s going towards you,” and for a few seconds I felt distinctly uncomfortable, my companions telling me afterwards that, directly after they had called out, they saw the thing, whatever it was, apparently pass right through me. On striking a light I found that my friend, who had been the first to see it, and who had fallen back in his chair, was very much unnerved.

He said that immediately in front of him he had seen a very tall figure, with a long, swarthy, skull-like face, that was indescribably horrible. He was on the verge of fainting, and said he did not think he could stand being in the dark again. Presently, however, he said he was better and, as I was most anxious to see whether the thing would come back, I blew out the light. We sat in silence for a few minutes, and then my unnerved friend called out : “ There it is again ! ”—and this time in such terror-stricken tones that I was really frightened on his account, and instantly struck a match, declaring the sitting at an end. We went home, convinced that a ghost of sorts, possibly of the

elemental order, had appeared in our midst, and that it had been seen in varying degrees of development by us all—that is to say, by the four of us who were sitting in the haunted room. The only one of us who hadn't seen it was the late comer, and even he came away wondering, for never in his life before had he dreamed such a vivid dream. A few years later I was destined to go there again, for I received a wire from the late Lord Curzon of Kedleston asking me to join him there. I did so, and we sat up two consecutive nights, but nothing happened.

Lord Curzon was not a spiritualist, but merely interested in the subject of hauntings. He proved a most genial and courteous companion, and I much enjoyed the time I spent with him, although it was, unfortunately, barren of any ghostly adventure. I subsequently visited the house again, my companions, on this occasion, being a war correspondent—who, much to my amusement, had armed himself with a six-shooter and various other weapons—and an old school friend. Both of them, at about two A.M., declared that they saw a number of spherical lights, variously coloured, floating round the room, and at my suggestion the war correspondent took a flashlight photo. When the plate was developed, however, nothing irregular came out on it, excepting some strange spots, or rather little bulbs of light, and these the war correspondent assured me were not caused by any fault of his or flaw in his apparatus.

The night Lord Curzon was with me, a professional photographer from Weston-super-Mare accompanied us, and all the while we were sitting in the

haunted room his camera was exposed; but it registered nought. Various people, at various times, have taken photos of the haunted room, but from what I have heard none of them has been productive of any result. I must say that I know only one photographer whose photograph of a ghost has inspired me with any confidence, and to that photographer and ghost photograph I will refer later on. None of the photographs I have seen of spirits, alleged to have been taken by professional mediums, have struck me as being genuine. It is so easy, under so-called test conditions, to fake photos.

I might add that attempts have been made to lay the disturbing influence in this house, by priests, than whom none are, assuredly, better qualified for the undertaking, but without avail: both the building and its grounds still continue to be haunted.

Another very interesting and complex case of haunting, which I investigated, occurred at a house about three miles from Pulborough. A lady and her daughter lived there, and the alleged phenomena consisted of stone throwing by invisible hands, mysterious rappings on one of the walls, and the appearance of a figure resembling that of a young man.

Both mother and daughter stated in their letters that, regularly, every night, as soon as the rapping began, which was between nine-thirty and ten, the figure appeared. It seemed to rise out of the ground, close by a swing on the lawn, and it then invariably came right up to the house, and shone a light, from what looked like a bicycle lamp, on to its face, so that its features were clearly visible. It then walked to a

hedge on one side of the garden and disappeared in it. The daughter declared that on several occasions she had fired at the figure with a rook rifle, as it stood under her window gazing up at her, and the bullet had, apparently, gone right through it, without in any way disturbing its equanimity. Sometimes she had fired a second shot, but the result was invariably the same: the figure, in spite of it, still stood there, unharmed.

Well, in response to an urgent appeal from them to go down and investigate the case, I went, and although I neither saw nor heard any of the things they said they saw and heard, I came to the conclusion that it was a singularly queer case. It was so queer, indeed, that I asked if I might, on my next visit, bring along three of my friends. Fortunately for me, the idea of my turning up with a party seemed to take their fancy, and they readily granted me permission to do so. Consequently, the next time I went, I took with me three of the most level-headed men I knew. The first night we drew a blank, but the second night we had certain results. Three of us sat by a window in one of the sitting-rooms on the ground floor, while the fourth, a Swede, sat in the room on the first floor, from the window of which, it was alleged, the figure had been fired at.

Well, while we were thus arranged, the ladies suddenly called to us to come, and, on our running upstairs, we heard sounds like knocking with a muffled hammer on the wall of the room where they were, and which, they informed us, were similar sounds to those they had frequently heard. We were listening intently,

and speculating as to what these muffled knockings could be, when the Swede called to us to come, and, on going into his room, we found him standing by the window, staring out.

“I have certainly seen something,” he said, “that looked like two very shadowy figures walking behind one another with their hands clasped, as if in the act of prayer. They walked in that direction,” he said, and he pointed to a certain spot in the hedge where the daughter had told me the figure of the young man invariably vanished. He added that the figures were so shadowy and indistinct he couldn’t tell whether they were male or female.

Well, that was all that happened that night, and on the morrow we had to return to town. However, before leaving I had seen and chatted with a farmer living close by, and he had told me a somewhat remarkable tale. He said that the house I had just been staying at was formerly inhabited by a very exclusive couple—namely, an artist and his wife—and that, while they were there, a young man, who looked very anæmic and delicate, came to stay with them. Before they left (apparently they took the house only for a short time) he saw the man digging a big hole on the lawn, just about where the swing was subsequently erected, and, when they went, the young man was not with them, although he had seen him there a few days previously. He added that the incident struck him as rather singular at the time, and that he had thought a good deal about it afterwards, especially when the next tenants (the lady and her daughter here mentioned) had complained about the place being haunted.

Naturally, on hearing this story, I suggested that the ground by the swing should be excavated, but, for some reason or another, my advice was never acted on.

Several members of the Society for Psychical Research, whom I told about the case, visited the house, but only one of them experienced anything unusual. I gathered from what he told me that stones had, apparently, been thrown at him, while he was on the lawn, but that they did not hit him; and, although he had made every effort to do so, he had neither been able to see nor to locate the thrower.

Well, this experience certainly seemed to corroborate one phase of the alleged haunting—a phase I have omitted to mention heretofore—namely, that stones had been constantly thrown at both the ladies (to this they both bore testimony), without, however, once hitting them, and without the thrower ever being seen or tracked, although the police had been called in for that purpose and had actually been on the spot whilst the stones were being thrown. Let me add that, in my opinion, the difficulties confronting a trickster must have proved insurmountable, since there were several dogs on the premises (the two ladies were great animal lovers) and the grounds were enclosed, in part by a high wall and in part by a hedge, rendered fairly impregnable by barbed wire.

Nothing further transpired, and the case, like the majority of such cases, remains, *in statu quo*, a matter of speculation and conjecture. Were you to ask me, in searching for a solution, was it ghosts, was it trickery or was it imagination?—I should feel inclined to answer, I think it was a mixture of all three.

## CHAPTER XVI

### SOME MORE RECENT CASES AND A FEW WORDS CONCERNING THE DANGERS OF GHOST HUNTING

**L**EARNING from a lady that her flat in Brunswick Square was haunted, I took a party of friends there, including an old gentleman of over seventy and a representative of the Press, on the evening of 15th February 1920. The room in which we all sat was alleged to be haunted by the ghost of a man who had murdered his friend, either in the house or on the site of it, about a hundred and twenty years ago. We sat as open-minded, unbiased ghost investigators should sit—that is to say, in no fixed positions, but just anywhere—and though the lights were out there was no restriction as to smoking, or even occasional talking. Well, very soon, people began to cry out that there were strange lights floating about, and, on someone saying they saw an eye near the ceiling, “we all,” to quote the Press representative, “looked up and saw the eye. It was elliptic in shape and showed dimmed and uncertain.” Before, however, we had time to observe more, “the old gentleman,” to quote the Press man again, “began to thump on a table with his fists and told us that some ghostly fingers were on his throat.” More than that, he screamed that he was choking, and, on my turning up the lights,

we found him leaning back in his chair, terrified and exhausted. That practically broke up the vigil, for, nothing further happening, we soon afterwards came away, not a few of the partly badly shaken. A detailed account of this investigation appeared in *The Globe* for 16th February 1920, and I simply mention it here because it shows that ghost hunting entails in certain cases, and for certain people, danger to health, and even to life. Whether the old gentleman imagined the hand on his throat, or whether a hand—a ghost hand—was really there I cannot, of course, say, but, no matter which it may have been, the effect was serious, and, had he had a diseased heart, it might have been even more so, for he might have died. Hence I assert most emphatically that it is only the very fit and strong, and they not always, that can embark upon any ghost-hunting enterprise with impunity.

In the case of an unevenly balanced, neurotic or very excitable person, the effect on the mind would, of course, be absolutely disastrous, since the severe shock that such a one would undoubtedly encounter, were he to find himself in a *bonâ-fide* badly haunted house, could only result in one thing, and that—madness. But apart from direct and immediate danger to the body and brain, those who go ghost hunting, or who live in ghost-ridden spots, incur other dangers. Ghosts, I am certain, connive at and bring about accidents, accidents to both limb and life.

Here is an instance. In the summer of 1913 my wife and I were staying with my sister, in her flat in Clevedon, Somerset, which she averred was haunted.

Well, saving for dreams, which we had nightly, of an unusually harrowing description, we experienced nothing unpleasant during the first week of our visit, but, soon after that, an alarming occurrence took place. At nine o'clock one evening, I was about to enter a room on the ground floor, but found that the door of it would not open. Although it was not locked, someone seemed to be pushing against it.

I went and told my wife and sister, who, besides myself and an old confidential servant (then sitting in the drawing-room with them), were the sole occupants of the flat, and they were much perplexed, since the door was in perfect order and, up to that moment, they had been going in and out of the room themselves. We all now tried the door in turn, and still it would not open. Then, quite suddenly, the weight against it seemed to be removed, and it flew open. There was no one inside.

Well, half-an-hour or so after this had happened, while we were still talking of it, we were suddenly conscious of a very strong smell of gas, and on looking to see where it came from, we found all the taps of the kitchen stove full on, and no gas burning. My sister declared that neither she nor the old servant had touched them, and as neither my wife nor I had been into the kitchen, how could it have happened? Only through some superphysical agency, surely. At any rate, I could not help coming to that conclusion. I had thought the matter over, in connection with what my sister had already told me, about the flat being haunted. She said that, prior to our coming, she had seen the shadowy forms of men and women

scowling at her, and, to my mind, it seemed perfectly obvious the phenomena my sister saw were responsible for the turning on of the taps, and that these and the phenomena we experienced collectively were intimately associated, the scowling phantoms being, in all probability, the ghosts of former occupiers of the house, who were attached to it and resented our being there. There was nothing in its history to warrant a belief that any crime had been committed in it.

In my work entitled *More Haunted Houses of London* I have quoted the case of a phantom clock in Upper Gloucester Place, Portman Square, that on two occasions—*i.e.* before the deaths, respectively, of the two occupants of the house—struck thirteen; and I refer to it again here, because it furnishes another instance of a ghostly presence in a house conniving at, and bringing about, through fatal accidents, the deaths of the humans inhabiting it. Both the people who heard the clock strike thirteen died soon afterwards, from the said unnatural causes.

To still further illustrate this danger from the Unknown, I must refer again to the notoriously haunted house in Somerset. Twice after doing an investigation there, I met with a motor accident on leaving, and on both occasions, so it seemed to me, narrowly escaped with my life.

On the first of these occasions we were going at a fairly high speed down a hill near Wrington, when one of the wheels of the car came off, and we—that is to say, my friend who was driving and myself—were shot out. Now although, as I have already

intimated, I escaped serious injury from this accident (we were both badly shaken, that was all), owing to it I missed my train home—I was then staying near Northampton—and, in consequence, caught a bad chill through sleeping in damp sheets at a local hotel.

The second accident, I am here instancing, as obviously brought about by the Unknown, occurred when I was riding in the side-car of a motor-bicycle belonging to a friend, and again being driven by a friend, albeit, in this case, a very careless one. We had left the haunted house not very far behind us, in the small hours of the morning, when, in turning a sharp corner, we collided with a milk-cart, and, before I realised what was happening, I found myself in the road, under the horse's feet. The side-car was pulverised, but, to our immense surprise (and the milkman's), we, my friend and I, were unhurt. Indeed, our escape was so marvellous, that I could not help regarding it as an additional proof that the Unknown was responsible not only for that accident but for the one I had previously incurred in similar circumstances, its motive being in both cases the same—namely, to teach us a lesson. And this view is, I think, strengthened by another occurrence associated with this same haunting.

For several years, amongst the photos that I keep locked up in my bureau, had lain one that I particularly prized. It was a photograph of the haunted room under discussion. Well, one day, wanting to refer to it, I unlocked the drawer in which it was kept, and found that it had vanished. This discovery gave me a distinct shock, and I was wondering whether or not I could be dreaming, when I recollected, with a start,

that, two or three years previously, another photograph of this same haunted room had also inexplicably disappeared, or, as I then thought, and still do think, had been literally spirited away. I might add that I am quite sure that the last time I saw the photographs, in either instance, they were carefully stowed away in a safe place, the one, as I have already stated, being, at the time, under lock and key.

To resume the subject of ghost hunting and its attendant risks. I am quite sure that not only does coming in contact with—and coming up against—ghosts entail the risk of subsequent accident, and, through it, loss of life or limb, but that it also entails a danger to health and morality. I believe that the superphysical is sometimes responsible for actual disease. I have noticed, for example, that, often, people have had cancer, after living, for a while, in houses reputed to be haunted by a peculiarly alarming type of what I term elemental.

As far back as the seventeenth century, houses of this kind came into notice, for Aubrey the historian says: “At the sign of ——, over against Northumberland House, Charing Cross, died the Lady Baynton (eldest daughter of John Danvers of Dansey). Some years after, in the same house, died my Lady Hobbey (her sister) of the smallpox; and about twenty years after did their nephew, Henry Danvers, die of the smallpox, aged twenty-one, wanting two weeks.”<sup>1</sup> John Timbs, referring to this quotation, calls such houses ill fated, but were I, in alluding to them, to substitute for the term “ill fated” “superphysically

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Predictions Verified*.

visited," there would be little alteration in the sense, the difference, assuredly, would be merely nominal.

In one of my earlier works I have attempted to classify the ghosts that frequent these ill-fated, or, in other words, superphysically visited houses. That certain haunted houses are injurious to morals is, I think, a belief that is generally accepted by those who believe in ghosts at all, and I have, from time to time, received letters from all over the British Isles bearing testimony upon this point. To quote only two cases of such haunted houses. Every tenant, for a number of years, that has stayed in a certain house in Jones Street, Berkeley Square, has taken to drink; while those who have lived for any length of time in a house in Devon have taken to vice of a peculiarly demoralising and odious kind.

The only thing to be done in the case of finding oneself let in for a house of this description is to sacrifice money and leave it at once.

Better that, than risk becoming sottish or peculiarly vicious. I have already spoken of certain localities begetting crime, but I omitted to mention that Aubrey gives a very interesting reference to a house of this type in his *Miscellanies*. He says :

"The Fleece tavern, in Covent Garden, was very unfortunate for homicides; there have been several killed there in my time." And a footnote adds that Clifton, the owner of the house, eventually hanged himself in it.

And now, having dwelt upon the dangers of ghost hunting at some length, for the simple reason that I believe those dangers to be very real, let me continue.

One badly haunted house that I have had ample opportunity of investigating is close to Sydenham. Some years ago, a lady I knew intimately, while sleeping, one afternoon, in her bedroom on the top floor of the house, awoke to see a tall figure in black bending over her. She was so frightened that she shut her eyes, and when she opened them again the figure had gone. She died the same year. The night of her death, my wife, who was sleeping in the house at the time, was awakened by a loud crash on the top panel of the door; but there was nothing to account for it. On another occasion, in the same house, a friend of ours and her daughter-in-law had a curious experience.

They were sitting together in the drawing-room, one evening, when an old picture (an old print in an oak frame), hanging by a cord from a picture-hook on one of the walls, suddenly began to move, as if someone were handling the cord rather roughly. Thinking it might be due to vibration caused by some vehicle in the road, both ladies went to the window and listened. Everything outside, however, was absolutely still, and yet the picture went on wagging about and banging to and from the wall. On another occasion the haunting took the form of footsteps. A charwoman complained that, when she was alone in the house, she constantly heard footsteps behind her, as if someone were following her about. Upstairs and downstairs they went, she declared, close to her, and always the moment she heard them she turned round, but could see no one.

Another phenomenon, at one time of constant occurrence in the house, was of a very curious description.

A pillow on one of the beds continually adopted a certain shape. No matter how often you shook it up and flattened it, the moment your back was turned it would assume this shape, which was grim and extraordinary to a degree. I engaged a local photographer one day to photograph it, and, although I had not told him there was anything eerie connected with it, he exclaimed at once, on looking at it:

“Why, what a strange shape! There is something about it that is almost alarming.”

He was quite right as far as he went; in fact, had he used the term quite, and said there was something quite alarming about it, instead of almost, he would have spoken no more and no less than the truth, for several people who had seen the pillow by candle-light had been actually frightened at it.

Other things have happened in the house, too, and, in my opinion, the haunting is entirely due to certain pieces of furniture; and for this reason. The articles in question are entailed property, and come from another haunted house, where they were originally in the possession of someone who harboured feelings of the most bitter animosity against the ancestry of their present owner, the tenant of the house near Sydenham.

The picture that swayed on the wall was, I understand, especially prized by this harbourer of ill feeling, and it is the latter's ghost, I feel sure, that is responsible for all the strange happenings that have taken place in the house. He hates anything that was his being possessed, as it now is, by the descendants of a man he loathed and detested, and he is striving his utmost to frighten them to death.

I myself once stayed in this house three consecutive nights, alone, and, although nothing happened that I could not account for on purely physical grounds, I must own that I felt decidedly relieved when my solitary sojourn there came to an end.

A very strange case of complex haunting, upon which I was once asked to express an opinion, occurred some years ago in a house near Birmingham.

It had stood empty for a long while, and the new tenants (the people who had communicated with me) had not been in it long before they began to understand the reason why. One of them, upon going downstairs one morning to breakfast, saw, standing at the foot of the staircase, looking up at him, a young girl in a pink dress. She was a good-looking brunette, and there was nothing unusual about her, saving, perhaps, her complexion, which was very pale. Wondering who she could be, as he had never seen her before, he said "Good-morning," whereupon, without answering a word, she turned on her heels and disappeared down a passage leading to the kitchen. Thinking it odd, but concluding she was a new servant, he descended into the breakfast-room, and, in the course of the meal, said quite casually:

"I say, mother, that new maid you've got is rather a queer egg. When I wished her good-morning just now, she simply stared at me, and, without saying a word, bolted."

"A new maid, Charlie!" his mother exclaimed, putting down the cup she was in the act of raising to her lips, and looking at him in mild astonishment. "What new maid?"

"Why, that rather good-looking dark girl," Charlie replied. "I told you, I saw her just now on the stairs."

"I've no new maid," his mother commented; "the girl you saw must have been a friend of one of the servants. I'll ask Esther." And Esther (Esther was the housemaid) happening to come into the room just then, Mrs Wood, Charlie's mother, said:

"Esther, who is that dark girl you have in the kitchen?"

"Dark girl?" Esther repeated, looking very puzzled. "Why, we 'ave no dark girl, mum."

"A dark girl in pink," Mrs Wood persisted.

Esther shook her head.

"There's no dark girl in pink in the kitchen, mum," she replied; "no one but cook, Sarah, Mary, and myself; and Mary is the only one of us that is what you might call dark. To be sure, cook 'as dark eyes, and this mornin' she's got on her pale pink dress."

"Oh, it wasn't cook," Mrs Wood said impatiently. "Mr Charles knows cook."

"Good heavens, yes," Charlie echoed. "It was someone quite different—someone I have never seen before."

"Then I don't know who it could 'ave been, sir," Esther exclaimed; "unless someone 'as got in from the road."

"But, surely that wouldn't be possible," Mrs Wood cried, looking rather alarmed. "You had better search the house and the grounds at once, Esther."

"Yes, mum," Esther responded, and left the room.

Well, the house and grounds, which were on the outskirts of the village, were thoroughly searched, but,

no one being found, the matter remained a mystery. A few days later, Mr Wood, while writing in his study, suddenly heard someone, apparently close behind him, cough. He looked round in surprise, but there was no one there. Thinking he must have been mistaken, he was beginning to write again, when the sound was repeated. As before, he turned round sharply, and, again as before, no one was there. He then heard, whilst he was still looking inquiringly around, what sounded like a violent fit of coughing, just in front of him, and, utterly unable to account for the happening, he sprang out of his chair, rushed to the door, and called to Charlie and other members of the family to come at once.

Consequently, the whole household met in the study and stood listening to the sounds, which continued for some minutes, and then, abruptly, ceased. Now as the house was not even semi-detached, but stood by itself in its own grounds, the phenomenon could not, as so often happens, be accounted for on the supposition that noises in the next house might, by reason of some acoustic property appertaining to the dividing walls, sound as if in the adjoining one; and the only conclusion the Woods found it possible to arrive at was that the place was haunted.

After this they frequently heard the coughing, at all hours of the day and night, and in all parts of the premises; sometimes it would follow them up and down the stairs, and often it was heard in the passages and garden. Nor was the coughing all. Much more alarming things occurred. At night various members of the household were often awakened by feeling their

bed raised up violently from the floor and then very abruptly let down, and it seemed as if someone must be under it, playing a trick on them, but, no matter how quickly they got up and looked, they never saw anyone in hiding, nothing, in fact, that could in any way explain the happening.

A more unusual kind of phenomenon than this, however, occurred once. Several of the family were seated in the drawing-room one day, when they heard what sounded like a choir of boys singing in the grounds outside. They all got up immediately, and going to the window, looked out. But there was no one to be seen. The sounds, however, drew nearer and nearer, and, apparently, came right up to the window they were looking out of, and passing under it, and round the house, gradually grew fainter and fainter, till they finally died out altogether. The impression the Woods got from this phenomenon was that the singing proceeded from some kind of religious procession, the music sung being undoubtedly of a sacred nature.

When they narrated this incident to me, I at once asked them if the house was built on the site of a church, and they said as far as they knew it was not ; but, as they subsequently stated that, according to a local tradition, the burial ground belonging to a church that was only a little distance off had once been much more extensive than it was now, I expressed the opinion that very likely the ground their house stood on had once been part of the churchyard, and if that were so, it would account for the disturbances, as houses built on the sites of cemeteries and old religious buildings were not infrequently very badly haunted.

This case recalls to my mind the case of a haunted house in Birmingham itself. I heard of it first, many years ago, when it was pointed out to me as the worst haunted house in the city, which I could well believe, for it was about the most gaunt and forbidding-looking place I had ever seen. Standing close to the Catholic Cathedral, it was believed at one time to have harboured a resurrectionist, who not only stole dead bodies from the churchyards, in order to sell them to local doctors for anatomical purposes, but also not infrequently lured people to the premises and "burked" them.

It is alluded to by Mr F. Gray,<sup>1</sup> by Mr F. G. Lee,<sup>2</sup> and several other writers. One very curious phenomenon seen there was a man without either eyes or eye-sockets. He usually appeared in a room on the ground floor, and was generally accompanied by a large grey spectral dog; also, figures in winding sheets were occasionally encountered on the staircases, and sometimes seen looking over the banisters. My informant was of the opinion that the house had been built over a cemetery, which would have been an additional reason for its being so badly haunted. It was pulled down, I believe, about thirty years ago.

But, to go on with more recent experiences. In 1912 my wife and I stayed in a haunted house in Sydney Street, Chelsea, and on one occasion jointly experienced a ghostly happening. One evening, about seven o'clock, we were sitting together in our bedroom on the top floor, when we suddenly heard sounds as of

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Recollections of a Warwickshire Constable*, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> *Sights and Shadows*, by F. G. Lee, 1894.

someone choking, from, seemingly, just outside our door. I got up, and going to the door opened it and looked out. There was no one there. My wife could not believe it, and consequently, saying that I must be dreaming, she came out on to the landing to see for herself. We then heard the sounds again, and this time they apparently came from the landing immediately beneath us. However, still we could see no one, and as we both stood peering over the banisters the sounds were repeated, lower and lower down the house, until, at last, they seemed to get to the ground floor; and there they ceased. It was a peculiarly harrowing phenomenon, since we could not help picturing someone in the last gasps of consumption, and, anxious and eager though we were to do so, we could not, of course, render any aid. What followed might be termed by some a natural sequence, by others it might not. Hence, leaving my readers to draw their own conclusion, I will merely state that, at the time the above phenomenon took place, the occupant of the bedroom next to ours, a lady whom we knew and were fond of (she was out at the time of the occurrence), died shortly afterwards of tuberculosis.

There are several haunted houses in Cheyne Walk, and, according to a rumour, the public-house where a mysterious crime was perpetrated, a few years ago, is also disturbed, at times, by nerve-racking superphysical demonstrations. Chelsea, in fact, is full of ghosts of one sort or another; and for this reason, perhaps, about four years ago, I arranged for a party of people to meet at a house in Church Street on Midsummer Eve, for the purpose of working spells. Well,

on this occasion I cannot say that I had any ghostly experiences, but an incident occurred that was distinctly humorous. After working several of the spells unsuccessfully, we decided to pay a midnight visit to some church, it being a superstition that if one stands at midnight, on Midsummer's Eve, in the doorway of a church, one may see come out of the church, in solemn Indian file, a procession of spirits in the likeness of those, respectively, in the parish, who are doomed to die within the next twelve months.

Hence, shortly before the witching hour, we set out towards the Embankment, headed by an artist in the garb of Mephistopheles. We met no one on the way saving a solitary policeman (who, thinking, no doubt, that the devil was unusually busy in Chelsea that night, and that he had better, perhaps, look to his own safety first, passed us by at anything but the regular pace), and on arriving at the church without mishap we arranged ourselves on either side of the porch, to await coming events. We stood thus, in silent expectation, for about half-an-hour, and then, as nothing happened, came away, somewhat crestfallen and disappointed. Our vigil, however, did have a result, although it was not an immediate one; for when we remembered that it had come off according to "summer-time," of which ghosts naturally take no account, we all experienced the same sensation—the sensation that, for once, at least, the Unknown had made fools of us.

Another adventure, not without its humorous side, occurred on All Hallows' Eve, 1923.

Hearing that the ruins of Minsden Chapel, near

Hitchin, were said to be haunted, I went over to Hitchin towards the end of October, and called at the house of a gentleman there, who, I was told, could give me some information regarding the alleged ghost. This I found to be correct, for the gentleman in question told me that the ruins were locally believed to be haunted by the ghost of a nun, and showed me a corroboration of the rumour in the magazine of an archæological society. More than that, he showed me, also, a most curious photograph, the history of which was as follows:—

One day, he, my informant, went to the ruins with his camera, and took a photograph of them. At the time he took this photograph he was not thinking of the ghost at all, but afterwards, when he developed the plate, he found a queer impression on it, which certainly looked like the shadowy figure of a nun. He told me that he did not know what to think about it, and appeared so frankly critical and unbiased in his views regarding it—such a pleasing contrast, in fact, to those who claim to be spirit photographers—that I asked him if he would join me one night and hold a vigil in the ruins. He agreed, and choosing All Hallows' Eve as the most favourable night for the venture, we visited the chapel, accompanied by a special correspondent of *The Daily Express* and two other representatives of the same paper. Two days later, on the 2nd of November, *The Daily Express* published a more or less facetious account of what happened, written by their special correspondent, and here are a few quotations from the article :

“Mr Elliot O'Donnell and myself, after a nervy

vigil among the overgrown ruins of Minsden Chapel, three miles from Hitchin, were wearily staggering back along the deserted London road. We were worn out with spells, tired of straining our eyes in search of a white nun, fed up with listening for a ghostly choir.

“ Suddenly, to our horror, three black figures leaped out of a dark lane, and we found ourselves under the flash-lamps of three Hertfordshire policemen.

“ ‘ Halt ! ’ they cried ; ‘ are you armed ? ’ Without waiting for a reply they quickly ran their hands in our pockets in search of revolvers. We demanded an explanation. They said that two men had a few hours before broken into the booking-office of Welwyn railway station, and had fired a shot at a policeman. Who were we ? Could we give a proof of identity ? That query made us think hard.”

With regard to this latter statement—“ that query made us think hard ”—I would like to say that it certainly might have done in the case of this special correspondent and his colleagues, but as I knew, what they, apparently, did not—namely, that my friend from Hitchin was close behind us and that he would, on his arrival, be able to satisfy the police that we were really neither burglars nor assassins—I daresay I felt very considerably easier in my mind than they did. At any rate what I anticipated was not long delayed : my local friend quickly appeared upon the scene, and as he at once explained the situation to our captors, who happened to know him personally, what might, but for him, have proved a rather awkward termination to our night’s adventure, was now regarded by us all as a huge joke.

Before I quote again from *The Daily Express*, I might add that the vigil itself had also provided us with one or two thrills, albeit they were merely occasioned by our catching glimpses of certain weird but natural effects, that, no doubt, appeared to us in an exaggerated form, owing to the gloom and intense loneliness of our surroundings. These certainly looked ghostly, and I feel sure that all who participated in the vigil must have echoed the sentiment expressed in the article from which I am about to quote again. Therein the writer says :

“Minsden Chapel is the most spooky place I have ever seen. All that is left of it is an arch here and there, the walls of the nave and parts of the chancel. A wood has grown up all round the ruins, a wood of tall, thin trees growing so thickly out of bushes and undergrowth that in places it is impassable.

“I confess that, as we entered the wood, a chill ran down my spine. The moon cast eerie shadows. Ruined arches shone white among the trees. A pheasant rocketed up with a beat of wings that almost stopped the heart. Faintly from distant farms we could hear dogs baying the moon.”

It was so. We could not well have chosen a more ghostly spot, a more bewitching hour and more conducive night, and, yet, no ghost came, and nothing happened that we could not account for on the grounds of the absolutely physical and natural. And such is often the case.

I have on several other occasions been held up by the police, and one, I think, is worth recording. It occurred in a house to the rear of Messrs Selfridge's,

which was let entirely for business purposes, with the exception of the top floor, and that, consisting of two rooms, one of which was termed a studio and the other a kitchenette, was let to a lady artist whom I knew. Now, as this lady told me that she had seen ghost lights and other phenomena in her studio, from time to time, I suggested that I should hold a vigil there, and to this she readily consented.

It came off one fine, still night in June, and after we had been sitting for some time and experiencing nothing beyond a little mild excitement, occasioned by one of the party, I was descending the staircase, alone, in the dark, for the umpteenth time, to see if the street door was still on the jar, in case of late arrivals, when a light was flashed in my eyes and a stentorian voice called out :

“ ’Oo are you, and what do you want ’ere at this hower of the night ? ”

“ I think it is for me to ask you that ! ” I began, and was about to add more, when I abruptly realised I was speaking to the police—to two, if not more, stalwart uniformed constables.

“ Oh, is it ? ” said the one with the bull’s eye, somewhat sarcastically. “ Then let me inform you it’s our business and dooty to enter ’ouses which ’ave doors hopen at this time of night. ’Oo are you, and what are you hup to ? ”

“ I’m ghost hunting,” I responded.

“ Ghost ’unting,” the policeman echoed. “ Come, that’s a good ’un ! ” and both he and his companion laughed. “ Look ’ere,” he suddenly exclaimed again, “ it’s no use beating around the bush like this, because

it won't do. You'd far better give a proper account of yourself at once."

"I was speaking the truth," I said. "I am ghost hunting; and if you don't believe me, I'll introduce you to the owner of the flat." I then called to our hostess, and after a few minutes' parleying the constables departed, somewhat, as I thought, reluctantly. There were no other thrills that night. Subsequently, I went to the house again, accompanied by Mr Arthur Sinclair, the famous Irish actor, and some of his friends, and on that occasion, while we were all waiting on the stairs in the dark, we heard sounds like footsteps pass by all of us, in turn, and some declared they saw green lights. At any rate, we came away convinced that the phenomena we had experienced fully justified a belief that the place was haunted.

Members of the theatrical profession have not infrequently accompanied me on my investigations. In the autumn of 1913, for example, I formed a party which included a very well-known West End actor, and went to a house reputed to be haunted, in Roehampton. The said actor, on this occasion, stated that he saw a table move, when no one, apparently, was touching it; but excepting for this incident nothing remarkable happened.

The event was interesting, however, inasmuch as we had one of the best-known professional mediums of the present day with us; and she, feeling no doubt obliged to furnish some support to her reputation for clairvoyancy, declared that she saw a Highlander in our midst, dancing a jig! At this, even those of us who were deadly serious, laughed; and consequently, her ardour somewhat damped, she forthwith relapsed into silence.

## CHAPTER XVII

### STILL FURTHER CASES AND A FINAL WORD

**I**T simply "doesn't do" for people with a guilty conscience to take up ghost hunting as a pursuit. During the war a lady asked me to investigate a case of haunting in her house in Mayfair. I accepted her invitation and, in due course, accompanied by a certain duke, "whose interest in ghosts generally had brought him into touch with me," and several of my friends, I went to the house. Twelve o'clock, and one, passed by, nothing occurring, and we were all beginning to get very tired and sleepy when, suddenly, the daughter of our hostess shrieked :

"There it is !"

"What do you see ?" I asked.

"A skeleton face," she gasped, with her eyes fixed on the window in front of her. "It is staring through the window at me."

"Is it the same face that you're always seeing ?" her mother asked.

"Yes," the girl panted. "For heaven's sake, turn on the light."

One of the party did as she requested, thus putting an end to our vigil.

"She's continually seeing that face," our hostess explained to me, as I was preparing to go.

"In the same place?" I said.

"No," our hostess replied. "Anywhere and everywhere in the house. It seems to follow her about wherever she goes."

"And no one else sees it?"

"Not that I know of," she answered. "But what do you think it is? Do you think it's an elemental, some kind of evil spirit attached to the place, or what?"

"I can't say," I replied. "I should want to know many things before passing an opinion upon that point. However, as no one but your daughter sees it, I am inclined to think it may be merely an hallucination, and my advice to you is to send her away to some lively bracing place for a change."

"Then you don't think the house is haunted?" the lady said, looking very disappointed.

"After what you tell me and our conference to-night," I replied, "candidly, I do not."

I then wished her good-night and left. Well, I made inquiries both about the house and the family inhabiting it, and I learned that the daughter had been mixed up in a case which had recently appeared in the papers. Some children in a home where the daughter was one of the staff of nurses had died under highly suspicious circumstances, and at the inquest that followed, revelations of an almost incredible nature, in regard to the establishment, had been made. The nurses, nearly all young girls, were shown to have neglected their duties shamefully, with the result that the place was indescribably dirty, while many of the children were ill and starving. Now, as I found out

that, prior to the deaths of these children, there had been no talk of skeleton faces, or of the house in Mayfair being haunted, I came to the conclusion it was, most probably, a case of hallucination brought about by a guilty conscience.

The girl being more or less responsible for the deaths, her conscience made her see things. In other words, it haunted her. Had there really been an objective ghost at the window, someone else would, assuredly, have seen it.

A rather queer case, depending on the evidence of one person, happened two years ago in Gower Street. I was sitting with my wife one day in our sitting-room in Bloomsbury Street, when an artist friend of ours, in a state of great excitement, ran in.

"My wife has had a terrible scare," he burst out. "She was sitting alone in her bedroom reading, this morning, when something, she said, made her look up, and she saw a dreadful face staring at her from over a bookcase. Then, as she gazed at it in horror, it seemed to come out from the wall, whilst the bookcase was hurled right across the room, and various objects on the mantelshelf and writing-table fell on to the floor. My wife was so terrified that she rushed from the room into the street, just as she was, only half dressed, got into a taxi, and came on to me at my studio. She says she wouldn't go back to that room alone for anything."

"Well, what can I do?" I inquired.

"Why," my friend replied, "we want you to come round to us to-night and hold a vigil in the room. My wife says she won't mind going back to the room so

much if you'll promise to be there, because you have had so much experience with ghosts, and may be able to suggest some way of getting rid of it."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I fear that is a bit dubious," I said. "Anyhow, I'll come."

I went, but, excepting when one of the party declared that they smelt a "dreadful corpse-like odour," the monotony of the sitting was unbroken. I planned to go there again, the following night, with a representative of the papers, but, greatly to my disappointment, I received a note from my artist friend saying that the landlady of the boarding-house, in which they were, was furious, and had threatened them with an action for slander of title, for saying that her premises were haunted. Hence, my second expedition had to be abandoned. An account of the case appeared in *The Daily Express* for the 1st August 1923, and I submit the following extracts:

"A bookshelf, torn bodily from the wall by an unseen hand, lies on the floor of a bedroom in a Bloomsbury boarding-house, and the woman who inhabited the room declared yesterday that she will sleep there no longer. At the moment of the crash, she said, the head and shoulders of a man, ashen-grey and swathed in bandages, appeared in the darkness of the alcove where the bookshelf had hung. She fled screaming."

Again:

"Mr Elliot O'Donnell, who has been called in to solve what he calls 'the case of the haunted bookshelf,' described these strange occurrences to a *Daily Express* representative yesterday. 'Noises began two

weeks after the gentleman and his wife had taken the room. There were first a number of simple raps and knocks, similar to those heard at night in many houses where the furniture, swollen by the heat of the day, contracts noisily under the influences of the cool night breezes. Then, one night, came a sound that could not have been made by the furniture alone, it suggested to the tense ears of the two listeners that an empty tumbler had been laid on top of the bookshelf, which hung in an alcove at the head of the bed. This curious sound was repeated several times.' "

The article then, again, refers to the bookcase incident, and with this reference concludes.

As I have already intimated, the case never got any further, since, after my friend and his wife left the house, there was no gaining admittance for the investigator. And here let me say to those who do so, how unprincipled and foolish it is to clamour continually to be given the addresses of the haunted houses I write about. Just one instance of what may happen, when such addresses are made public, will show why.

In 1890 a certain house in Egham, on the main road from Virginia Water to London, was sold by Mr John Ashby to Mr Charles Arthur Barrett. Mr Barrett let it to a succession of tenants, none of whom said a word to him about its being haunted.

In 1903, however, Mr Stephen Phillips, the poet, took it, but, after staying in it for a while, left it in a panic and went to the local hotel. While there he spread the rumour the house was haunted, and *The Daily Express*, getting to hear of the case, published

an account of it. As a result, an action for slander of title was brought by Mr Barrett against *The Daily Express* and Phillips, and the plaintiff was awarded two hundred pounds damages. In March 1906 *The Daily Mail* also published an account of it, giving a detailed description of strange knockings, footfalls, and other phenomena alleged to have been experienced in it by Phillips, and Mr Barrett again brought an action, receiving this time ninety pounds damages. *The Daily Mail* appealed, but with what result I do not know. Subsequently, however, a third paper published an account of the same happenings, and it, too, had to pay damages.

Well, after this, people began to think twice before they mentioned, in writing, the name of any house they believed to be haunted, and as I had no desire whatever to see my none too flourishing banking account grow considerably less, I decided that, hereafter, with regard to the haunted houses I wrote about, names and addresses must be even more rigidly suppressed than heretofore. It is, of course, unnecessary to maintain the same secrecy in the cases of historical places, such as Hampton Court and the Tower of London, which are well known to be haunted, their value, perhaps, on that account, being enhanced rather than otherwise.

The last time I went to Hampton Court, a good many years ago now, I got into conversation with an official, who told me several very interesting things.

"You know," he said, "Lady Katherine Howard is said to run through the 'Haunted Gallery' at night, shrieking. Well, when Mrs Cavendish Boyle and Lady

Eastlake slept in the apartments adjoining the gallery they both declared they heard her, and there have been others since who have actually seen her. Only the other day, a servant passing through the gallery rather late one evening, had a rare fright. She saw a white figure cross the floor in front of her and vanish in the opposite wall. She told me it looked like a woman with long, loose flowing hair, but that it was gone so quickly that she hadn't had time to observe it closely. She was very badly frightened. I believe, too," he went on, "that the ghost of Lady Jane Seymour still walks—or rather glides, for they say she never makes the slightest noise—through the 'Silver Stick Gallery,' carrying a lighted taper, and, in my opinion, she will continue to do so, in spite of the attempts that have been made, from time to time, to lay her. Another ghost that haunts the place—and I can testify to this from my own experience—is that of Madam Penn, the foster-mother of Edward VI. As you know, she lived and died here during Queen Elizabeth's reign. Well, a good few years ago, some ladies of the name of Ponsonby lived in the rooms which, if they were not the actual ones, certainly adjoined those that were occupied in former years by Madam Penn, and these ladies used to complain of continually hearing a sound like a spinning wheel, which they could not account for; and, besides this, an official, who was on duty one day within sight of these apartments, saw a figure clad in a long grey robe and hood, and looking exactly like the stone effigy of Madam Penn, come from one of the rooms and disappear in front of him. Later, when the Board of

Works were repairing that part of the Palace in which the apartments of the Misses Ponsonby were situated, they came across a sealed chamber, which, on being opened, was found to contain a spinning wheel, which fact, to my mind, furnished a very good corroboration of the phenomenon which the Misses Ponsonby always declared they were continually experiencing. But the finding of the wheel," the official continued, "instead of having a good effect upon the hauntings, only seems to have made them worse, for, for some time afterwards, there were constant complaints of weird things happening in these same apartments. The servants declared they were often wakened at night by feeling cold hands laid on their faces, while they heard footsteps perambulating the floor and passing close to them; and two ladies (the Misses Ponsonby's successors), hearing a terrific crash in their room one night, sat up in bed in alarm, to see the whole apartment filled with what they described as 'a ghastly lurid light.'"

"And you have seen something yourself?" I remarked.

"Yes," he said, "once. I was sitting on a bench in the garden one day, waiting for one of my colleagues to join me, when I felt a hand suddenly laid on my shoulder. I turned round with a start, and saw a tall lady in grey, about six paces away from me. She had her back towards me, so that I couldn't see her face, and was in the act of walking away. I called out 'What do you want?' but she did not answer, and, after walking on a few yards, she vanished. I knew then that she was a ghost, and, from her dress and

general appearance, concluded she must have been the ghost of Madam Penn. That is the only time I've seen her, though I believe she appears pretty often. I'm not much of a scholar, but from what I can gather from certain of the histories I've dipped into—as you may imagine, you get interested in a place you've lived in a long time, and want to know something about it—I should say that that poor young King Edward VI. was poisoned, and that Madam Penn had a finger in the pie. And that would be a pretty good reason for her haunting the place, wouldn't it ? ”

I certainly agreed with him, and this concluded our conversation.

According to the *Annual Register*,<sup>1</sup> some workmen, while excavating at the Palace in November 1871, unearthed two human male skeletons, which had lain there for about one hundred and fifty years. The fact that they were buried in lime strongly suggested foul play, in other words murder, and if this were actually the case, then, of course, yet another reason for the ghostly disturbances in the Palace is to hand.

With regard to the Tower of London I have discovered nothing very fresh. The accounts of the seeing of the apparition in the form of a cylindrical figure, by Mr Edmund Lenthal Swifte, Keeper of the Crown Jewels, and of the spectral bear seen by a sentry, are too well known to be even briefly alluded to here. They will be found recorded in detail in several published works.<sup>1</sup>

A story that has not appeared quite so often in

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* November 1871.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide*, for instance, *Notes and Queries*, 1860.

print, I think, is the one told me by an official in the Tower, and which I subsequently found was alluded to in an anonymous work published in 1882.<sup>1</sup> It was to this effect. One night a Captain of the Guards was going the rounds with a sentry at the Tower, when he saw a strange light burning in the old chapel.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed. "What's that?"

"I don't know, sir," the sentry replied, in rather a quavering voice. "I've seen it several times before, and other queer things, too."

Determined to fathom the mystery, the Captain sent for a ladder, and placing it against the wall of the chapel, mounted, and peered through the window. What he saw dumbfounded him.

Down the aisle of the church, which was aglow with an eerie white light, came a procession of knights and ladies, attired in the full-dress costume of several centuries ago, and at the head of them, all ablaze with jewels, walked a lady, whom he thought bore a strong resemblance to portraits he had seen of Queen Anne Boleyn. They came slowly and solemnly towards him, and on arriving at the foot of the aisle they turned, and walked round the chapel. Round and round they went, four or five times, at the same slow, measured pace, never once glancing either to the right or left, and then suddenly vanished, the whole place simultaneously being plunged in darkness. It was then, and not till then, that the Captain realised that what he had been looking at was a supernatural manifestation. He visited the spot with several of his brother officers

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Ghostly Visitors*, published by E. W. Allen.

the following night, but saw neither the light in the window nor the procession.

My informant declared that he had often seen lights shining through the chapel windows himself late at night, but he added that they always vanished the instant he climbed the walls and peered in.

Another historical place I have been to, that is reputed to be haunted is the old Mint House, Pevensey. I visited it one day in the spring of this year, and was informed by the genial gentleman who shows people round the quaint, oak-panelled rooms, that he had actually seen the ghost in one of them himself. He described it as the shadowy figure of a lady, in old-fashioned attire, and he said it gave him a very considerable scare, which I could well imagine. I asked him if he had tried to get into conversation with it, and he said he had not, he had been far too frightened to utter a sound. And that is what nearly always happens in like circumstances. A *bonâ-fide* ghost or visitor from the other world, as in Bible days, inspires such terror that one is generally bereft of speech; were it not so, we must by this time have learned considerably more about Ghostland than we know at present.

In reply to my question as to whether or not there was a reason for the haunting, my Mint House guide informed me that a most horrible double murder had once been perpetrated on the premises. In 1586 the house was rented, for a while, by a London merchant called Thomas Dight, who lived there with his mistress, a young and beautiful girl. Returning home unexpectedly, one evening, Dight found his paramour

in the embrace of a handsome young stranger, and, mad with jealousy, had the pair seized. The girl, after having had her tongue plucked out at the roots, was bound hand and foot and thrown into a secret apartment of the house—now styled the Haunted Chamber—and left to die of loss of blood and exhaustion, whilst her lover was roasted alive over a slow fire. Both bodies were afterwards successfully got rid of—the girl's, presumably, being buried in a spot where it was never found, and the man's thrown in the river and, eventually, carried out to sea.

This twofold crime, indeed, remained an absolute secret (that is to say, it was known only to the actual perpetrators of it) till 1601, when it was finally divulged by Dight on his deathbed. Ever since then, the place has been haunted. But, apart from any question of ghosts, the Mint House is well worth visiting, on account of its unique historical associations and great architectural beauty.

Another of the places that may be openly termed haunted, and talked about as haunted without running the risk of a legal action, is the splendid avenue, on the Surrey side of the Thames, between Richmond and Twickenham.

Both the avenue and the adjacent river shore have been long haunted by the figure of a man, presumably a Cavalier, since he is invariably seen in the costume of that period. According to Mr F. G. Lee,<sup>1</sup> the late well-known psychical researcher, F. W. Myers, could tell of two people, for whose word he could vouch, who had seen this ghost simultaneously, while Mr

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Sights and Shadows*.

Edward J. Bennett and Mr R. H. Harper, both of Richmond, could testify to having seen it, separately. Mr Harper further informed Mr Lee that it had been seen by eight or ten persons, collectively, which evidence, in my opinion, is rather more convincing.

Well, it was after reading Mr F. G. Lee's book that I determined to pay a visit to the spot haunted by the Cavalier, myself. I arrived there about eight o'clock one still, summer evening.

In the account of the haunting given by Mr Lee, mention is made of the third tree one comes to in the avenue, supposing one is walking from Richmond to Twickenham, but nothing happened till I had got some distance beyond it, when a feeling that I was being followed suddenly made me look round, and I saw something shoot across the path behind me. What it was I could not say, because it was gone too quickly. I had not proceeded very far, however, before, the same sensation prompting me, I turned again, and again witnessed the same thing. But this time the figure, apparently, did not move quite so quickly, and I got the impression that it was a man dressed in some extremely quaint and fantastic costume. Believing now that it was actually the ghost I had read of, I felt immeasurably thrilled, and pursued my way in the greatest state of expectation and excitement. Nothing further occurred, however, till I was almost at the end of the avenue, when a slight and curious noise on one side of the pathway made me look round, and I saw, peering at me from behind a big tree, two dark scowling eyes, set in a very white face. I hadn't time to decide whether the face was

a man's or woman's before it went like a flash and was gone.

I ran to the tree immediately and looked behind it, but there was nothing there. Feeling a bit unnerved, but determined to try for further developments, and so thrash out the mystery, if possible, I slowly retraced my steps ; but although I remained pacing up and down the avenue for some time after this, nothing happened, and, finally, I came away.

There are several haunted houses in Scarsdale Villas, Kensington. Two of these stand side by side, and both are visited, periodically, by the same ghost. It is the figure of a man, clad in a convict's hideous broad-arrow suit, and it has a nasty habit of following one on tiptoe up the stairs ; and creeping into one's bedroom, on all-fours, in the dead of night. Several people have told me that they have been frightened almost to death at the spectacle, but, having failed to obtain permission to hold a vigil in either of the houses, I have not yet had the chance of putting my own nerves to the test.

My wife and I both had a rather curious, but quite slight, experience in another house in Scarsdale Villas.

It was in the autumn of 1923. Our bedroom was in the rear of the premises and overlooked a long strip of garden. Well, about twelve o'clock on the night of the 6th December my wife awoke me, saying there was a strange light in the room. I at once sat up, and saw just above the mantelpiece a peculiar light, circular in shape, and about the size and colour of an orange. We both saw and watched it for some minutes, asking each other what it could be, when,

quite suddenly, it vanished. We never saw it again. Now the night was very foggy ; and we were not near enough the road, nor the houses in our rear, for the light to have been due to any reflection. Moreover, the blinds in the room were drawn down, and a screen was unfolded across the window recess.

Hence, we could only conclude the light was caused by some superphysical presence, and this opinion received a certain amount of confirmation later on, when we learned that other people who had resided in the house had complained of its being haunted.

We left there the following spring, taking a flat in Museum Street, that had recently witnessed a tragedy. The tragedy, which was reported at the time in the newspapers, occurred in January 1924, and it will, doubtless, be fresh, still, in the minds of many of the people who live in the district. What happened, in brief, was this.

One of the two ladies who occupied the flat, after constantly attending séances, took to stating that she continually heard voices from the Other Side, telling her to join them ; and she went on making these statements for some time. Then, one day, the friend she lived with went away, and, soon after she had gone, a French lady, the tenant of the floor immediately overhead, smelling gas, and tracing it to the spiritualist's bedroom, rapped at the door. There was no reply. The French lady, rapping again, but still getting no response, and thinking the matter serious, immediately went to the landlord and told him of the occurrence, the result being that a policeman was fetched, the door of the room forced open, and the

spiritualist lady found lying on her bed, dead. She had committed suicide by inhaling gas. Well, after that, the flat stood empty, no one caring to take it, till I came along. Liking the situation, and jumping at the opportunity of being able to live in quarters that might very possibly be haunted, I took the flat at once, with, of course, the approval of my wife. We were there about four months, and had we not been, then, obliged to leave, owing to the fact that our landlord had let us the flat without having first applied to his landlord for consent to sublet, we should, in all probability, be there now. During our tenancy, it was only on two occasions that I experienced anything of a ghostly nature, though I frequently felt "something" was there. What I actually experienced was this.

On two consecutive mornings, while lying awake thinking of nothing in particular, I suddenly felt a very definite and sharp tug at my shoulder. Naturally, and on both occasions, I turned round at once, to discover the cause, but there was nothing to account for it. I realise that this experience may seem trite and even tame in print, but, I can assure you, it was anything but tame at the time. Indeed, few things have ever impressed me more ; for I could feel—feel most acutely—on both occasions, a presence not of this world standing by my side and earnestly scrutinising me.

It has often struck me that considering the fact that Bloomsbury stands on the confines of the old Rookery, and includes within its boundary the Field of the Forty Footsteps (places which in olden days

witnessed the innumerable crimes and the foregathering of criminals of every description), it should be, "by good rights," one of the most badly haunted districts in London, but, as far as I know, and I am constantly making inquiries, it is not so. At the same time, Bloomsbury, of course, contains a fair number of haunted places. The British Museum certainly harbours one ghost, and, perhaps, more; there is the house in Gower Street with the haunted bookcase, the flat in Brunswick Square, and, at least, two houses in Red Lion Square, to both of which I have referred in other books.

The house in Coram Street where poor Harriet Buswell met her dreadful end on Christmas Eve, 1872, should be haunted, but, beyond the rumour that mysterious noises are heard there on the anniversary of the murder, I am not in possession of any definite information.

Then there is the house in Cartwright Gardens where Mrs Rachel Samuel was found done to death on the 11th December 1878. I have been told that it, too, is periodically disturbed by ghostly visitations. Cries and groans are said to emanate, in the dead of night, from the kitchen where the body was found, and the apparition of a white-faced woman—not Mrs Samuel, but, probably, her murderess—is stated to be seen peering in at the kitchen window and stealing stealthily along the basement passage.

Neither Harriet Buswell's murderer nor Mrs Samuel's was ever actually brought to book, though in both cases suspicion rested very strongly on certain individuals who were arrested. In each instance the

street where the crime was enacted, curiously enough, changed its name. Great Coram Street dropped the "Great," and became simply Coram Street, while Burton Crescent, instead of continuing to call itself Burton Crescent, assumed the equally aristocratic title of Cartwright Gardens. Almost, but not quite, within the West Central district there is yet another haunted house, that witnessed an unsolved mystery that led to the street in which it occurred changing its name.

I allude to the house in Endsleigh Gardens—at the time of the trial, Euston Square—where poor Miss Hacker's body was found, in the summer of 1879. I think, of all the crimes of that decade, and there were many, that was one of the most horrible and ghastly. As an aunt of mine knew Miss Hacker when she lived at Canterbury, and was popularly known as one of the "Canterbury Belles," the case has always interested me, but more particularly, perhaps, of late years, as I have reason to believe that one of my ghostly experiences took place in the very house where the crime was committed. As, however, I have narrated it in detail in another work, I should be repeating myself too much were I to refer to it again here.

With regard to the hauntings at the British Museum, a direct contradiction appeared in the papers the other day of the alleged and notorious haunting connected with a certain mummy. The writer of the article, someone in authority at the Museum, asserted that that particular mummy had never been in the Museum at all, so that the story of the case bringing bad luck to whoever had the handling of it was, demonstrably,

bunkum. Well, I am not going to say that the writer of the article is a perverter of the truth; all I wish to say is, that there are hauntings in the Museum, quite apart from that notorious and much-disputed relic. Minor officials, evidently longing to confide in someone, have told me of the queer, unaccountable noises they have heard in the Oriental Department, and I have had several queer experiences in that and other parts of the Museum myself. Once, for example, when I was in the Oriental Department looking at "Katebit," I felt a blow on my back. I turned sharply round, but there was no one there. A few moments later, while I was still looking at the same figure, the blow was repeated, and again, on looking behind me, I could see no one or nothing to account for it. On another occasion, while descending the stone steps leading from the upper part of the building to the main hall, I distinctly felt someone brush against me, but there was no one in sight: I was to all appearance the one and only living individual on the staircase. Lastly, while I have been wandering along the corridor on the immediate left of the entrance hall, footsteps have accompanied me, and I have been acutely conscious of some invisible presence walking by my side.

I fancy some of the officials could and would say a great deal on this subject, were it not for certain material considerations preventing them. Apropos of mummies et cetera, one must, I think, admit that the ancients appear to have been far more in touch with the Unknown than we moderns. Progress—hateful word, oh, for a little retrogression!—has almost severed the bond that links us with a spiritual

world, and it is only when we travel in the Far East, where the older civilisation is still alive, that we realise what we have lost. There, though rarely, we do meet the *bonâ-fide* psychic, the man in whom soul is still the dominant factor.

Through some connection, perhaps, with this train of thought, I call to mind one of my most recent and, perhaps, most interesting experiences.

At about ten-thirty, on Thursday evening, 29th May 1924, I was seated with about ten other people round a deal table in the kitchen of a flat in Redcliffe Square. I was listening to a professional medium conversing with one of the company, who was supposed to be under control, and to knocks that were taking place at intervals, when presently—something, seemingly, causing me to do it—I glanced up in the direction of the open doorway, and there, standing on the threshold of it, I saw a tall figure all in black. It resembled a man, and it was wearing some sort of headgear that resembled a top hat, but I could not see its face with any degree of distinctness. Two of the ladies present saw it, and one of them seemed so perturbed that I suggested that the lights should be turned on. When this was done, the figure was no longer visible; no one but myself and the two ladies I have mentioned seem to have seen this phenomenon, which I am sure had nothing whatever to do with the medium, whose so-called psychic faculties by no means impressed me, and who appeared (and doubtless was) to be wholly ignorant of its presence. Now, as one has so often noticed is the case with sequels to most things, the sequel to this “sitting” turned out to be the most

important part of it. To explain my meaning, I must refer to the past. One of the sitters, a man of Scottish Highland extraction and a world-wide traveller, had, during a sojourn in Thibet, met a lama who had foretold his death and the death of a friend who was with him. In the case of his friend the prophecy had been fulfilled to the letter—in his own case, he told me, he did not think the lama's prophecy would be verified, since it foretold his death for that very year, 1924, and he had scarcely ever, in spite of the rather serious accident that had befallen him a few months previously, felt better than he did at that moment. This conversation took place some time prior to the above "sitting," and after that "sitting" I never saw him again, for he died quite suddenly a few days later. Now, although I did not think of it at the time, there were several points of resemblance between the figure seen standing in the doorway at this "sitting," and the general outline of a lama of Thibet. For instance, the long black garment and tall headdress. However, that is as far as I can go. For the rest, I can only suggest that my readers should do as I have done, put two and two together, and having done that, they will, perhaps, draw their own conclusions.

With the above experience, which to me was more than ordinarily interesting, since the man whose death had been foretold was a very dear friend, I must terminate this volume. I am always keen and ready to investigate haunted houses, and shall be very glad to hear of any from my readers. As I have said before, however, I do not think ghost hunting is a pursuit to be recommended. Apart from the ghostly dangers,

to which I have alluded in a previous chapter, there is the risk to one's general health. Going into an empty house at night and waiting there in the dark in constant expectation of one knows not what is bad both for body and mind, and, even in the case of the strongest people, sooner or later it is sure to tell. I do it, partly, because, at this stage, I cannot help myself, the quest of the Unknown attracts and fascinates me, and, partly, because I set out on this mission with a definite purpose, which, as yet, has not been, and, most likely, never will be, fulfilled. My object, primarily, was to find out something definite with regard to another world, and, if possible, offer some kind of consolation to the poor ghosts, who would appear, for the time being, at any rate, to be exiled from it, and incidentally, perhaps, to acquire the knowledge, otherwise unobtainable, that would elucidate a certain event in my family history. However, I have certainly not achieved the former, for, beyond satisfying myself that the Unknown at sundry times and in divers places does choose to reveal itself to certain of us, which is neither more nor less than what our most remote ancestors were aware of, I have, so far, unravelled nothing. I have on several occasions spoken to what I have believed were ghostly entities, but I have never obtained any communication from them. Neither, do I believe, and this I repeat very emphatically, has anyone else—at least, not on any authentic and corroborative evidence, the only evidence that normal, open-minded individuals can accept. Hence, as I have so often said before, the most that those of us who are sane and honest can

do at present is to speculate. Despite the claim so many put forward that in psychic matters we are more advanced than our forefathers, that we really are so is a debatable point ; and although our experiences may have led us to believe that another world exists, with regard to that other world it is only the hopeless crank who would say more—only the fanatic who would shut his eyes to the fact that we know nothing about it. How, indeed, can we know anything about it, when we know, as yet, so very little about this world and ourselves ?

If we cannot say definitely—and none of us can—what we are now ; if we cannot diagnose, label and classify all the intricate constituents of our complex whole—the whole embracing, as we believe it does embrace, both mind, spirit and matter—and fully account for our creation and advent into this world—in other words, explain the “I”—how can we expect to possess an irrefutable knowledge of something so far removed from ourselves as another world or plane ? All that any of us, rich or poor, clever or ignorant, can do at present is to theorise ; for with regard to the Unknown—that is to say, another world—and here let me remark that, apparently by a common instinct, the majority still applies to another world its correct title, the Unknown—we are all students, we may all learn, when the time comes, but none of us can teach.

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